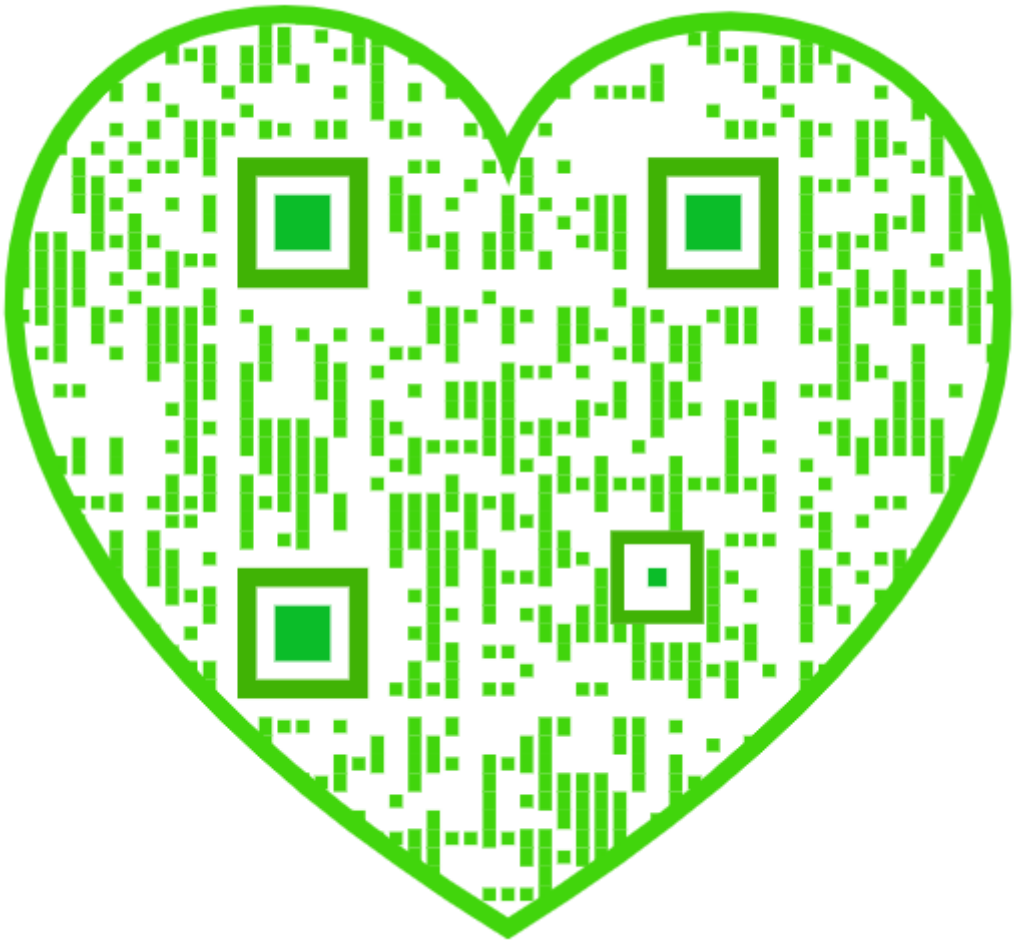

THE CHRISTIAN ETHIC.

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THE

CHRISTIAN ETHIC

BY

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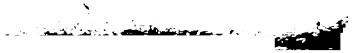

PREFACE.

IT is impossible to understand the Christian Ethic aright without some knowledge of the antecedent moral systems of the world, especially the Semitic and the Greek; nor can we estimate it truly, unless we take note of the fact that it came into the world "as a grain of mustard seed," destined to grow and develop; and that, in the course of its evolution, it has been influenced collaterally by a thousand things, that have conjointly and successively made it what it now is. In other words, some knowledge of its relation to the past and the future is essential to an adequate understanding, both of its origin and its significance for all time.

The type of character and action, which is distinctively the product of the Christian Religion, has—like every other development of the life of mankind—a historical basis; and its highest vindication will perhaps be

found to be its subsequent outcome, or the results it has wrought out. If its incoming, and its evolution—more especially its "increasing purpose"—have developed new ideals, and created types of character previously unknown, these ideals and types become historic witness-bearers to a fact of immeasurable value to the future of the world.

This little book is issued as a partial answer to the question, "What are the distinctive features of the Christian Ethic, as distinguished from the other moral systems of the world?" It must be noted at the outset, however, that it is a total mistake to divide the philosophy, or the science, of Ethics into two sharply contrasted sections—the one dealing with the natural, and the other with the supernatural—or the one Pagan, and the other Christian. If there be a fundamental chasm, or "great gulf fixed," between these two—if, in other words, the Christian superseded the natural Ethic of the world—the discussion of their mutual relations would end, much in the same way as a province is

annexed by a victorious army. Throughout the Middle Ages the chasm between Nature and the Supernatural was widened in an unnatural manner; and, during that remarkable period in the development of the human mind, Ethics—while subordinated to Theology—was manacled by artificial fetters. If, however, one aim of the Christian religion be the restoration of harmony between Nature and the Supernatural, it will be seen that the mediæval tendency was not only unscientific, but was at the same time retrograde.

There can be no doubt that the teaching of the Founder of Christianity was primarily moral teaching, while it involved elements of dogma and of experience as well. It is to be noted at the same time that our inquiry into the distinctive features of the Christian Ethic does not affect, or even trench upon, theological dogma. It may perhaps be found that its Ethic has occasionally saved the Christian dogma from crystallising, under the rigidity of tradition, by introducing a vital and progressive element, alongside of that which is

fixed and stationary. On the other hand, and reciprocally, the intellectual or doctrinal aspects of the Christian Ethic have given consistency and strength to its morality; and its recognition of the Divine in relation to the human, has sometimes saved it from becoming both meagre and diffuse. The two things —morality and dogma—are at once independent, and inter-dependent. They are organically connected as coefficients. When one of them has been vital and strong, it has always been helpful to the other. If there is no historic instance in which the decay of religious belief has promoted morality, there is certainly none in which ethical decay has been helpful to religion. The absence of the latter may not always, or at once, have undermined morality, but it has never advanced it; although, it is essential to a strong and stable Ethic that all unverifiable dogmas in reference to Religion be candidly exposed, and deliberately set aside.

We are bound, however, by the supreme necessities both of the intellect and of the

heart, to retain all that is verifiable in the sphere of dogma ; and we find, historically, that much belonging to that sphere has been helpful to the moral life of mankind. Suppose, *e.g.*, that there is conclusive evidence, not only of a moral order existing independently of the individual, but also of a moral Centre toward which individual effort tends, and of an infinite Orderer who from that centre controls the moral sphere, such a fact must, in a very important way, influence the conduct of the race.

To begin with, moral law may be regarded as the result of the long-continued effort of society to conserve itself—of the individual to adjust his relations to the organism of which he forms a part, and of human society to adjust its relations to the individual units composing it—so that the largest and the highest possible good may result to every member in the body corporate. But if that be a radical—and perhaps the primitive—idea of morality, it is not necessarily the whole of it. It would require

many volumes to indicate the amount of moral life, evolved and developed in the world, before the introduction of Christianity.

To suppose that the Christian Ethic was altogether new is to disregard the most obvious facts of history. "Doing justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly," were recognised and honoured in the earlier systems, and these virtues were practised far and wide, long before the commencement of our era.

No dispassionate student of history can however doubt that the incoming of the Christian Ethic has resulted in the formation of a new type of character and conduct, which may be literally described as "a new heaven in a new earth". Perhaps supreme amongst its results has been its influence in refining and ennobling the relations of the sexes. The ideals of manhood and womanhood, their mutual relations—each one developing the other, and bringing out all that is noblest and best in it, each being nevertheless distinct from the other,

> For woman is not undeveloped man
> But diverse—

these things were never taught in the same way by any antecedent system. The Christian virtues of constancy, patience, tenderness, and devotion between the sexes have given rise to altogether new phases of character—the trust of the child, the devotion of the mother, the self-sacrifice of the sister for the brother, the toil of the father for his son, and of the son at times for his parents. All this has been the product of a new process of evolution within the Christian brotherhood, but it was not evolved out of the antecedent Ethic of the world.

It is vain to think of exhausting the discussion of this subject: its ramifications are endless, and are both theoretical and practical. The aim of the present volume will have been met, however, if it induces others to pursue research within a field which is not yet wrought out. Its adequate discussion demands wide knowledge and deep reverence. The attempt to determine what the Christian

virtues are calls for the exercise of candour, sympathy, courage, and fair-mindedness, especially toward opponents ; while, at the same time, the investigator goes on his own way, and takes his special path, till the end is reached.

The consideration of Ethics as a branch of Philosophy, of Science, and of History, I reserve for future discussion.

WILLIAM KNIGHT.

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THE CHRISTIAN ETHIC.

CHAPTER I.

PROLEGOMENA.

When Nature is separated from the Supernatural by a sharp line of demarcation, what is common to those systems of morality which sprang up before the Christian era, and the greater one, in the atmosphere of which the modern world lives, is apt to be forgotten. On the same ground the Philosophy of Religion, and the science of Comparative Theology, are frequently ignored. It is thought by many that Christianity superseded Philosophy, and made it superfluous; more especially that it suppressed the antecedent Ethic of the world.

It may be as well therefore, before drawing out the distinctive peculiarities of the Christian Ethic, to consider this view of the case, in a few preliminary paragraphs.

(1) The first point to be noted is that Christianity was not an entirely new product, springing up *de novo*, or descending *de cœlo;* and that, in consequence, there is much in its moral teaching that is common to it, and to the ethics of Greece and the East. It appeared as a new development, working strictly on the lines of antecedent history, and was of necessity "the heir of all the ages." systems, and philosophies of the past. It also freely assimilated elements kindred with its own, wherever it found them. It was not only the culmination of Judaism; but, as the unconscious "desire of all nations," it was the completion, and the fruit, of much that had gone before it. It would have told against Christianity, and not in its favour, if it had set itself in antagonism either to the Philosophy, the Art, or the Religion of the past; and we find very curious parallels between much connected with its origin and that of other religions, while there were many things in the life, the character, and the aims of its Founder, that were kindred with the genius

of apparently antagonistic systems. But its secret affinity with everything true and good beyond itself is only a sign of its width of sympathy, and its world-embracing character; while it may also be evidence of its universal destiny.

(2) A second feature in the Christian Ethic is its unique combinations; or its union of principles, which are elsewhere antagonistic, or very partially harmonised. We shall find, as we proceed, that it brought out of obscurity, and set its seal of recognition upon, a group of virtues, which were merely guessed at in earlier times. We shall find that what was a rudimentary or obscure germ, in other systems, is raised by it to a central place; while many of the miscellaneous rules of duty, scattered precepts or counsels—which occur more as suggestions, than as developed principles elsewhere—are brought to a focus in Christianity, and are illumined by their alliance with the new elements evolved and illustrated in its ethic.

(3) A third point is that Christianity gave to the world certain moral ideas, which it has

been the task of subsequent centuries to develop, the full significance of which could not possibly be known at the beginning of its history. In the first century of our era it was impossible to foresee the latent possibilities of growth, and the vast power of expansion, that lay within it. This is significantly brought out in one of the symbols used by its Founder, *viz.*, the parable of the mustard seed. We may take as one illustration of it, the union of the human and the Divine, or the reconciliation of the natural and the supernatural, by means of which all the dualism—which remained unsubdued in the Greek morality—is overcome ; and human life is reconstituted, not so much from its base upwards, as from its centre outwards. That idea was expressed in the earliest Christian records ; but ages of development, and of controversy, were required, before its import could be adequately understood. It may be that its full significance is only now being discerned, and that further developments will unfold it still further.

As another illustration, take the universal element in the Christian religion, or its mission to the masses of mankind. That too was announced at the first, but its full extent is only now being understood, in the union of Christian socialism with the aristocratic ideal. The same thing is to be seen in the more refined types of virtue which are being developed, and which have been very slowly evolved, in the course of the ages; so that we may say, without exaggeration, that if —as St. Augustine put it—there was a Christianity before Christ, Christianity is still expanding and developing, and that it is growing with the growth of Christendom.

A historical fact of some importance may be mentioned in this connection, *viz.*, that while the philosophy of Stoicism influenced the Jewish modes of thought, and coloured the teaching of its schools—while it also indirectly influenced the first Christian teachers —the Stoics, on the contrary, received nothing from Christianity. Stoicism was the philosophy of the Pharisees. It was the philosophy

in which St. Paul was educated; and, in his address on Mars Hill at Athens, he showed that he was acquainted with one or other (or with both) of the Stoic poets, Aratus and Cleanthes. Now, when it is said that Christianity received some things from Stoicism, and that we have no evidence that Stoicism received anything from Christianity, the statement may seem derogatory to the latter; but it is the very reverse. It is a sign of its immense superiority, because of its power of receiving and assimilating what was good outside of itself. Stoicism was rigid, inelastic, unassimilative, non-eclectic. From this came its sterility, and its final decline. Christianity, on the contrary, allied itself with all it found true in the previous thought of the world. From this has come its hold on the future, its power of growth, its inextinguishable fertility, its immortal youth, and its rejuvenescence from age to age.

(4) The fourth point is that, in comparing the Christian Ethic with previous and subsequent systems, the primary question is not

whether the result in moral practice has invariably been higher in Christendom than it has been amongst the disciples of other and competing creeds. The question to be first considered is the relative merit of the systems themselves. It is unquestionably true that a system, the adoption of which makes no difference to the practical life of a people, cannot be regarded as intrinsically more excellent than one that is intellectually or morally its inferior; but no unbiassed student of history can deny that the practical life of Christendom has, on the whole, shown *an immense advance* upon the morals of pre-Christian ages and non-Christian lands. The primary question, however, is not whether isolated instances of noble conduct, or even of practice as heroic as the Christian, have been seen beyond its frontier. That may be at once admitted. Self-sacrifice, generosity, constancy, patience, and purity of life have all been seen under other types of civilisation. Nay, it must also be admitted that Christianity displaced, for a time, some of the earlier virtues, which had been

developed under the antecedent systems, or at least threw them into the shade. Take, as one example of this, the Greek virtue of patriotism, in its finer phases. For a time, that virtue had no glory to the eye of Christendom, because of a glory that excelled it; and, however intense and glowing, it was a narrow—if not a provincial—virtue; while the larger philanthropy of the Christian Ethic displaced it inevitably.

In connection with this it may be noted—both as a psychological and historical fact—that the wider any emotion becomes in the course of its development, it necessarily loses some of the intensity it had in its narrower sphere. Thus, something was lost for a time at the birth of Christianity, which the world possessed before. The Christian Ethic, however, is not to be blamed for this. It is rather to be honoured: first, because its inmost spirit is conservative of good, wherever it finds it; secondly, because it invariably adds to the good it finds a fresh element of its own; and thirdly, because without such a

temporary displacement of an old virtue, a new one could not possibly arise.

Take, as another example of the displacement of a virtue, one belonging to the class which Aristotle would have regarded as an intellectual, rather than a moral virtue, *viz.*, that passionate eagerness with which the finer spirits in Greece pushed on in their quest for speculative truth. That was an intellectual virtue of the first magnitude. But it was necessarily cast into the shade at the birth of Christianity. The new Religion so monopolised and absorbed its votaries that they could not fail to ignore much that was good in the previous speculation of the world. It was part of the genius and mission of Christianity that it appealed, not to the educated few, but to the masses of the uneducated; who, in their religious training, needed the pictorial and the concrete, rather than the speculative and the abstract. It magnetised these men, and drew them on in fervid allegiance; and thus its earliest disciples embraced the Christian religion in an unreflective manner.

Religious intuition, rather than philosophic second-sight, directed them; and all, who thus adopted the new Religion, of necessity for the time being abandoned Philosophy.

From this it will be seen in what sense Christianity set Philosophy aside, or rather why a speculative or rational view of Christianity was impossible in the first Christian age. The leaven of the new Religion—with vast ideas lying latent in it, hidden in their germs—could not possibly have laid hold of the human heart, and taken root in the world, if it had entered into it in a philosophical form. Its individual disciples, and the world at large, required to seize it first of all by intuition—by unsophisticated feeling, and the response of the heart—while reflection upon it followed afterwards; and long time was required for the development of its contents, the evolution of its latent germs, and the comprehension of its vast significance.

(5) The next preliminary point is a corollary of the last, *viz.*, the futility of the charges which have been advanced against

Christianity on the ground of its aggressive attitude. Every new movement of civilisation—each philosophy, nay, every literary, social, or political scheme—is, and must be, to a certain extent, antagonistic to its predecessors. In proportion to the originality, or the uniqueness of its origin, it must be iconoclastic; because, its very *raison d'être* is the inadequacy of the past. It was therefore inevitable that the primitive heralds and missionaries of Christianity should come into collision with much that was good in other religions, that they should sometimes ignore that good, and be occasionally blind to the excellences they came across. How, for example, could St. Paul be expected to do what the modern world calls "artistic justice" to the art of Phidias, and of the Periclean age? We cannot conceive him getting into raptures over the Venus de Milo or the Castellani Aphrodite, had he chanced to see them. When he preached on Mars Hill he was fronting the wondrous Parthenon, with its unrivalled symmetry of form, and perfection

of detail. It is very questionable if he ever glanced at the frieze with its marvellous statuary in the metopes. He would have been probably quite indifferent to the literary and philosophical merits of Plato's *Republic*, or to Aristotle's *Ethics* either as a manual of duty or a work of art. We cannot imagine him having any interest in, if he could ever have had leisure to read, the "tale of Troy divine," or the *Antigone* of Sophocles; any more than he could have anticipated the future, and been able to appreciate such things as the *Divina Commedia* of Dante, the music of Palestrina, the sonatas of Beethoven, or the poetry of Tennyson. But there is nothing strange in this. It was inevitable every way. Each religious system destined to live —and worth living—has *necessarily* come into collision with much that was excellent in the systems it supplanted. It might be possible for a system, not destined for life and practice, but for contemplation only, to be scrupulously fair to everything around it. Speculation can be catholic, and comprehensive; contempla-

tion can be eclectic ; but a moral system, that is to leaven imperfect human nature, must come into collision with imperfection ; and therefore, in the initial stages of its career, it cannot be absolutely impartial. The impartiality, which some systems rank as a cardinal virtue, would at that stage lead to indifference and the loss of enthusiasm, if not to positive stagnation.

(6) Further, and as a sixth preliminary point, it is only now, after ages of controversy and conquest, that we are able to see the Christian Ethic in its completed character, and to eliminate the essential from its accidental elements. We cannot ascertain all the specific features of its morality by a mere examination of the Biblical records. In these documents we have no detailed summary even of the chief points of Christian doctrine. Hence the need of the subsequent labours of the creed-builders, of the moralists, and of the systematic theologians of the Church catholic. They have drawn out for posterity many elements that were latent at the first,

and have made explicit what was then the implicit possession of the world and the Church. In addition to this, it was necessary that the new Ethic should incarnate itself (as it were)—that its leaven should have time to work, and to influence humanity—before all its various elements could be accurately unfolded and determined. It is for this reason that, in trying to get a comprehensive view of the genius scope and tendency of the Christian system, we must take the whole subsequent history of Christendom into account; and further, that while reading and interpreting those documents which record its origin, partly in the light of that to which it has given rise, we must not contemplate any of its isolated types—in other words the various sects which have arisen, with their peculiar "notes" of doctrine or of dogma—but we must look to that catholic and cosmopolitan Church, which is independent of party. It is often said that such a Church does not exist; and that we must all be sectarian, whether we know it, or know it not. To this

it may be replied by a simple counter statement, *viz.*, that it *is* possible to get beneath the dialect of the sects, and to apprehend what is central in the Christian Ethic, as well as what is radical in its Theology. It may require some moral insight to do so, but we have neither to ascend into heaven, nor to go down into the deep to find it, because the thing is near at hand. We only require a sympathetic spirit, and a heart "at leisure from itself".

To discover the characteristic features of this new Ethic, we must first of all examine the history of its origin; that is to say we must know it, as unfolded in the books which form the New Testament canon; and it is the subject-matter, or moral contents of these books—rather than their origin—that here concern us. Next, we must become acquainted with the contemporary records of historians and critics, both friends and foes. Then, the details which have survived of the lives of those men, who were its earliest disciples and advocates, should be known; and

next, the subsequent history of Christendom, and the influence which it has exerted for eighteen centuries on the thought, the life, and the civilisation of the world. We must also take into account the numerous Institutions, which have sprung up in the wake of Christianity; and all the varied work that has been done in the world with a philanthropic aim, which has been its unmistakable fruit—although the workers may not always have known of it. Finally, we must note the moral atmosphere which surrounds the modern world, and which we all unconsciously breathe, altho gh many of those who breathe it are ignorant of the source whence it comes. All these things must be summed up, and taken together, in order to ascertain what the world owes to Christianity, and what the distinctive features of its morality are.

So much for our preliminary questions

CHAPTER II.

THE DIVINE FATHERHOOD AND HUMAN BROTHERHOOD.

LOOKING back from the vantage ground of the nineteenth century we find that in Christianity we have a new body of moral doctrine, due to at least two separate causes.

In the *first* place, moral life has been evoked, and nourished, through the recognition of certain truths — both as to the Divine Nature, and the human—which were previously known only in fragment; but which have been brought out explicitly in the Christian Ethic, and have been harmonised with each other.

These are (1) the truth of Monotheism, transfigured by Christianity into that of the Divine Fatherhood; (2) the moral unity of the race, transfigured by Christianity into the universal Human Brotherhood; and (3) its moral destiny, illumined by Christianity in

the form of Personal Immortality. There is further (4) the teaching of Christianity as to the nature of Evil, especially the distinction it draws between sins and faults; (5) its teaching as to Duty, more particularly its positive character, as compared with the negative spirit of Hebraism; and (6) its method of Reformation or Recovery, by the unification of the Divine and the human natures.

In the *second* place, there were certain virtues connected with the life and the teaching of Jesus, which are pre-eminently Christian, because they were first exhibited in moral harmony by Him. To these two sources the distinctive features of the Christian ethic may be traced.

Turning to the first class of virtues—or those which were due to the recognition of truths or ideas, lying previously in shadow or merely guessed at—the first point to be noted is the monotheistic root of the Christian Religion. Much of its morality arose out of the recognition of God, as morally related to the individual. It was not based upon an

abstract doctrine of virtue; nor did it appear, in the first instance, in the form of an elaborated system, but as a new *life*, due to the recognition of God in conscience. Hence it is that Christian morality culminates in piety. While Hellenic piety was in a sense the bloom of its morality, Christian ethic was from the very outset, the flower of devotion, or the blossoming of piety. This characteristic it owed partly to the noble elements it received from Judaism; and if we would discover all its distinctive characteristics, we must compare it not only with the Greek, but also with the Hebrew morality; while we contrast them both with the Oriental. To take the latter first. As compared with the Asiatic quicksand of an ethic unconsolidated by religion, Jewish morality was "founded on the rock" of monotheistic belief. The doctrine of "I am that I am"—or of the Eternal as a recognisable Being related to the individual—lay at the root of the Hebraic righteousness; and it was reiterated by the prophets and seers of Israel for generations. In other words, the "doing justly,"

and "loving mercy" was indissolubly associated with "walking humbly with God". The Monotheism of the Jew, however, was not the final solution of the mystery of the Divine Nature and character. While Christianity took up this Monotheism, which it inherited, it did more than merely assimilate it. It interwove with it the further idea of the Divine Fatherhood, an idea which was first articulately taught, and practically borne witness to, by the Founder of the Christian religion. The foreshadowings of this idea, which occur in Hebrew literature, were casual guesses, surmises, or figures of speech. It only became apparent in the light of that unique Life, which, when revealing the wealth of the filial nature, at the same time disclosed the paternal.

It is also to be noted that the Christian Ethic recognised, and included, a truth which lay within the early Pantheistic systems, *viz.*, that the finite and the Infinite were capable of union, there being no absolute chasm between them. Hebraic theism pure and

simple, looking upon the Divine and the human as two natures standing apart, with a wide chasm between them—natures between whom a contract could be made, or a covenant adjusted—did not fully recognise the counter truth of the unity of the two. Pantheism threw emphasis on that truth, but it accomplished the union of the two natures—the finite and the Infinite—by silencing one of them, or extinguishing it. If the finite disappears and is lost to view, there can be no reconciliation of the one with the other.

Pantheism may be described in all its forms as the supersession of the finite by the Infinite, which remains all in all and Lord of all. In the Buddhist Pantheism it may be said that the Divine was levelled down to the human. Unity was reached, but philosophic dualism was illegitimately abolished. In the Greek Pantheism, on the other hand, Nature was levelled up to the Divine. Unity again was reached, but dualism was with equal illegitimacy set aside. In the Greek religion sundry powers within

Nature, rather than above or beyond it, were worshipped; but the life of the worshipper was in no sense a process of elevation by moral acts. In the Jewish Monotheism religion was recognised as a moral process of union with God; but the union brought about was, to a certain extent, incomplete. In the Christian Ethic it was completed. The unity of the Divine and the human was recognised, while their union was accomplished by a moral process; and so, the earlier Judaism was transcended rather than abolished. Pantheism and provincial Monotheism were at once surpassed, and blended in a higher unity; while the βίος τέλειος was found, not in the mere expansion of germs existing in human nature from the first--which was the Greek ideal of a harmonious life—but in a process of discipline, in the course of which the higher elements in our nature transfigure the lower ones. This, however, is to anticipate.

Returning, it is easy to see how the recognition of the unity of God in the Christian Ethic bears upon moral practice, if we

compare it with the Polytheistic or the Pantheistic worship of Greece, or the Zoroastrian worship of Persia. The obvious moral deduction from a Polytheistic, a Pantheistic, or a Manichean creed is the palliation of evil. If there are many Gods within the universe, or two eternally warring Principles—one good and the other evil—the votary of each might justify his actions by the characteristics of the Deity, or Principle, he serves. If a virtuously disposed Greek strove after wisdom with Minerva as patroness, he might afterwards find his cruelty sanctioned by Mars, or other tendencies condoned, as he entered the temples of Dionysius or Aphrodite. In contrast with this it is very evident how a genuine Monotheistic belief must influence practice, and how by means of it the moral law must gain new strength.

Christianity, however, did much more than merely announce the unity of God, it added the sublime idea that this one God was, at one and the same time, above man, and yet kindred to him ; and, in a profound sense, the

Father of mankind. If the relation between the human nature and the Divine is in any realisable sense whatsoever, the relation of sonship and paternity, the unity of the two natures is undoubted. But this conception of the relationship of man to God was only guessed at, by one or two minds, in the earlier religious periods, Indian, Semitic, and Greek. At the very best it was a surmise. It was never an explicit belief, until the Christian era commenced; and, when at length it became a regulative conviction within the Christian Church, the moral attitude of the finite nature toward the Infinite was fundamentally changed.

The radical point, however, in the contrast between the Hebraic and the Christian Monotheism is this: that although the former did not merge the finite in the Infinite—but conserved them both—it at the same time placed so vast an interval between them that the counter truth of their unity was lost to view; while Christianity brought that truth explicitly, and very vividly, to light. The Hebrew notion was

that God was above on the heights, man below on the earth; and that they could occasionally have intellectual recognition, moral conferences, and hours of fellowship. The counter idea, of the Infinite as, at one and the same time, above, beyond, and within the finite - its interpenetrating essence, as well as its source and goal - was new to the world at the commencement of the Christian era.

The second truth—brought out and illumined by Christianity—was the moral unity of the human race; and it was dealt with, very much in the same way as the first. It was raised and transfigured into the doctrine of the universal brotherhood of mankind. If the worship of man be directed toward a multitude of separate Divinities, the humanity that worships will be similarly divided; but with the unity of God there will naturally be associated the unity of man. If the Divine nature is paternal, and there is only one Father, it will follow that there is but a single

family, and that all its members are fraternally related. The moral corollary of this is one which has not been always realised. It is that the jealousies of individuals, the rivalries of tribes, and the antipathies of nations will be abolished in the feeling of universal friendliness, or good-will between man and man. Tribal sentiment, and national feeling, will not be extinguished; but they will be taken up into, and held in alliance with, a new idea of brotherhood. Patriotism as such—the kind of Patriotism which was a distinctive virtue in Greece—will be merged in Philanthropy; and here we find a compensation, for the loss of the narrower virtue, which had been for a time set aside by Christianity. It was temporarily displaced, having "no glory, because of the glory that excelled it" in the new Philanthropy; in other words, because a lower truth, as to man's nature and relations, was merged in a higher and a wider one. The inferior was taken up into the superior, and was glorified by its alliance with it. It is easy to see how a new type of virtue would

naturally arise from this recognition of the universal brotherhood of the race, and also how comprehensive its range would become, if it penetrated all social life, abolishing individual hatreds, local jealousies, and both tribal and national revenge.

Before advancing to a third idea, one result arising from the recognition of the two already mentioned should be noted. It is the universality of religion. Out of the twin ideas of the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man comes that of the common relation of all men to God; and, therefore, the universality of religion. We have no longer, a philosophic life and religion for the cultivated classes on the one hand, and, on the other, a life and religion for the uneducated masses. The realm of abstract contemplation, and esoteric thought, is one that can only be entered by the avenue of speculation; and must therefore, to a large extent, be the luxury of the privileged few. It is a realm to which the majority of mankind, the "dim common populations"—hewers of wood and

drawers of water for the rest—must in the main be strangers; but, one point in the teaching of Christianity which revolutionised the world is this, that the highest kind of life is within the reach of every one, and can be realised by the illiterate peasant, as well as by the erudite and the noble.

This should perhaps have a place of its own amongst the distinctive features of the Christian Ethic instead of being set down as a corollary or deduction from the two former ones. At the same time it should be noted that it arises out of them, and especially out of their combination; and it is a further corollary of them that "the way to the blessed life"—or to the union of the human nature with the Divine—is not along the path of mere self-development, but along that of self-conquest, and even of self-renunciation in the service of others. Not that the Christian Ethic is, in any sense, indifferent to culture. The very reverse is the case; because, before any one can give himself away adequately in the service of others, he must *have* something

to give, and must therefore *be* something worthy of bestowal. One cannot spend himself to any purpose on behalf of others, unless what he spends has a certain value; and thus, paradoxical as it may seem,—and it is indeed one of the paradoxes of the Christian Ethic—he must cultivate himself, in order that he may succeed in transcending himself; while, contrariwise, he must devote himself to others, in order that he may adequately fulfil the end of his personal existence. It comes to this, he must "die, in order that he may live".

A long chapter might be written in illustration of this. It has been the subject-matter of a thousand homilies in Christian literature; and it is important to note how far superior the Christian Ethic is, in this respect, to earlier moral systems, and especially to Stoicism. In its initial stage, Stoicism narrowed the fulness, and broke up the harmony of life, by repressing the freedom of its powers; while it ended in the mutilation of human nature, the withering of the emotions, and even the extinction of the passions. Christianity, on the

other hand, enjoined no kind of crucifixion, except of things that are intrinsically evil; its aim being the transfiguration of the passions. The end it contemplated was the restoration of humanity, and the increase of its powers. Its very aim was defined as "that we may have life, and that we may have it more abundantly"; this new and more abundant life it proposed to secure, through the regulation of the lower elements of our nature by the higher ones; the Divine transfiguring the human, and abolishing its discord and disorder.

CHAPTER III.

THE IMMORTALITY OF THE INDIVIDUAL.

We now reach the third idea, brought to light, emphasised, and illumined by Christianity. It is that of Immortality, or the survival of the individual after death. It has been said that it is to Christianity alone that we owe the doctrine of Immortality. Such a statement, however, is altogether incorrect. Immortality was recognised in Egypt and the East, as well as in Greece, long before the Christian era ; but it was entertained more as a hope than as a conviction ; as a possibility, amounting sometimes to a probability, but not taking rank as an article of belief. Among the Greeks it was on the whole the shadowy surmise of a few speculative men. The masses thought very little about it. Living in the present, and satisfied with what it brought them, they took no thought for the

morrow. The few, who did give serious thought to the future, were rather reluctant to think that their friends had ceased to live, than persuaded that they still existed. The continued felicity of a few eminently noble men, and the continued misery of a few exceptionally bad ones, seemed a natural sequel to their life on earth – a sort of reaping as they had sown ; but we search the Philosophy, the Literature, and the Art of Greece in vain for anything like an articulate statement on the question of Immortality. It is true that Plato represents Socrates as speaking of it very nobly in the *Phædo*—in those conversations with his friends in the prison—and also in the *Apologia.* Plato's was perhaps the loftiest Greek utterance on the subject ; but, with all its loftiness, it did not rise into the atmosphere of clear conviction. As early as the days of Homer we see that the Greek mind entertained the notion of a shadowy sort of existence after death ; but the future life was thought of as a gloomy sepulchral state, in which the dead pined for

the loss of their previous life and their former society. In the poems of Pindar a ray or two of brighter light is shot in upon the darkness. In Æschylus the curtain again falls, Sophocles does not raise it, Euripides draws it closer down; and the sublime speculations of Plato on the subject are a series of ideal longings, and imaginative forecastings, having no definite link of connection with our life as it now is.*

Then we find that the usual inscription on the Greek tombs in the Kerameicus was a simple χαῖρε, farewell; or, if they extended further, they spoke of the feelings of the bereaved, rather than the destiny of the departed. The almost universal feeling of the masses on the death of their relatives was that of irreparable loss. In this respect almost all Athenian tombs tell the same tale; and in the Roman world the epithets applied to death were such as these; it was "hard," "cruel," "relentless," etc. It was repre-

* This is only a subsidiary instance of the flaw which lies at the heart of Plato's Idealism, with all its magnificence and suggestiveness.

sented as a hunter snaring men, or symbolised as a cup-bearer with poison in his cup. When we pass from Greece to Palestine we find here and there isolated instances of a larger hope, but we find no widespread conviction on the subject. There are noteworthy expressions in the Psalter, such as "Thou wilt not leave my soul in Hades," "I shall be satisfied when I awake with Thy likeness"; but to the Jew the being "gathered to his fathers," meant being gathered in the same burial-place. No doubt cases occurred in which the higher hope was entertained. We find individual expressions which go further than Plato's sublimest thoughts upon the subject, or than Seneca's saying that it was "Nature's privilege to die"; but these were entertained only by a few, and they were vague, at their highest and best.*

If now we contrast the sentences in which death and the dead are referred to in Roman

* I have an impression, which however I cannot verify, of being indebted—more than twenty years ago—for the ideas embodied in this paragraph, to a friend now deceased.

literature about the time of the Christian era with the statements of St. Paul, or even with the inscriptions in the Catacombs at Rome, the difference is seen at once. What was only guessed at in Greece and Palestine by a few—as the tide of intuition ebbed and flowed within them—was announced as a fact at the commencement of the Christian era; and a belief in Immortality has entered ever since as a regulative element into the creed of Christendom.

In these ethical studies we do not need to raise the question of *how* this belief in Immortality was "first brought to light". That is a strictly theological question, and our present inquiry only indirectly and incidentally touches on theology. What the moralist has to do,—in the first instance at least,—is to note the historical fact, and to try to estimate its effect. And the fact which he has to note, and to estimate, is this, that ever since the departure of Christ from the world, a belief in the immortality of the individual has risen in the firmament of human conviction, and has never disappeared; although it has been very variously

interpreted and explained. This may be illustrated by four lines from Tennyson's *In Memoriam.* The ancients might have said, and some of them did virtually say :—

> I blame not Death because he bare
> The use of virtue out of earth ;

but none of them added, or could have added :—

> I know transplanted human worth
> Will bloom to profit otherwhere.

That is the difference ; and as Jean Paul Richter said, the whole moral temperature of the world has been raised by means of it.

It is easy to see how this conviction adds dignity and value to the present life, wherever it is cherished, however it may be interpreted, and on whatsoever grounds believed. If the good and evil which we do not only live after us, in the issues to which they gave rise, but also live on in the lives of their originators, and if the present life be only the prelude to another, the former assumes a new moral significance. If it be but one act in a drama "of which"—as Jouffroy put it—"the pro-

logue and the catastrophe are awanting," then the isolated moments of present experience are bound together by a new connecting thread. If we detach the present from the future, or substitute the shadowy hopes of Hebraism and Hellenism for the Christian idea of immortality—if we fall back upon the doctrine of the annihilation of the individual, and the survival only of the race, the Buddhist absorption in Nirvana, or the Pantheistic merging of the individual in the all—we remove one of the strongest incentives to a noble life, and take away one of the most powerful of the moral levers which now move the world.

It is unnecessary to raise the question, in what form is this belief to be entertained by us? Are we to believe in the recognition of others after death as we recognise them here? Are we to combine the doctrine of pre-existence with that of posthumous existence? and are the whole details of the doctrine of immortality verifiable throughout, or from root to branch conclusive? What we have to

note, and to emphasise, is the practical effect of the belief, in whatsoever form it is entertained, the immense power of the conviction over human life as it now is. The possibility of living a lofty life without it cannot be denied; nor can it be denied that it is a nobler thing to do the right from the simple conviction that it is right, than to do it because thus only can we expect felicity. But then, Christendom does not follow duty from the mercenary motive of reward in a life to come. That is one of the spurious charges sometimes brought against it by the ignorant or the hostile. Its belief in immortality is a disinterested belief, and it is clear that with this conviction superadded to the two already mentioned—that is to say, with the prospect of continuous existence in a life to come, added to a belief in the Divine Fatherhood and the human brotherhood—all the virtues of the present life will receive fresh stimulus and nutrition, especially amid the disasters, the reverses, and the losses of experience. That is a result which the world owes to

Christianity. If,

> In a season of calm weather,
> Though inland far we be,
> Our souls have sight of that immortal sea
> Which brought us hither,
> Can in a moment travel thither,

and we can also say, with the same poet, that

> When the great and good depart
> What is it more than this,
> That man who is from God sent forth
> Doth yet again to God return?

we see the force of the question with which he concludes his *Elegiac Stanzas*:—

> Such ebb and flow must ever be,
> Then wherefore should we mourn?
> The future brightens on our sight,
> For on the past hath fallen a light
> That tempts us to adore.

Let a student of history try to estimate the effect of the entrance of this belief into the world—as it finds expression, not only in the creeds of the Church, but also in all the higher European literature—let him try to sum up

the amount of moral force which it has given to human life, and he will find it immeasurable. It has given a new motive for action to multitudes ; it has nerved men and women by the thousand in the discharge of tasks from which flesh and blood shrank back ; it has founded a new type of heroism ; while the mere prospect of their own continuance and enlargement has exalted and transfigured every one of the virtues.

CHAPTER IV.

THE NATURE OF EVIL.

We have already seen what the main idea of the Christian Ethic is, first as to the Divine nature, second as to human nature, and third as to human destiny. We now reach a fourth point that is a distinctive characteristic, *viz.*, its conception of evil, or that disturbance of human nature, which all moral systems recognise, although they interpret it very variously. There would be no need of any ab-extra teaching on this subject, if our nature were not in some way disorganised. If in a perfectly normal state, it might be left to the mere evolution of its powers, untaught by rules, unguided even by examples. But ours is no such automatic life of orderly development, moving as the seasons or the planets do. It is, in many ways, disorganised; although the disturbance may be a sign both

of its vast latent possibilities, and of its destiny.

Every moral system deals, in one way or another, with this question of evil; discussing what it is, whence it is, and whither it tends. They try to explain its nature, if not its origin. Perhaps the Christian view of the subject may be summed up thus:—

(1) Evil is not a positive substance in human nature, else it would have been the creation of God, a direct product of the Divine causality. It is not an element existing as a fixed quantity, external to the moral agent, although it exists in the wills of other agents. It is not a quantitative cosmic essence, with a realm of its own, outside the characters that experience it. Were it so, the Christian Ethic would be involved in a dualism as pronounced, and as fatal, as that of Zoroaster. Evil is not admitted by Christianity to such a rank as that. It is not even admitted into the realm of things positive, however terrible its reality. On the contrary—as St. Augustine pointed

out so well—it is a defect, or privation, a shortcoming, a missing of the mark. It is more than mere weakness, or folly; more even than a wound to the spirit of the wrong-doer. It is a blight within him, and a break in the moral order of things; while the act of transgression, at the moment of wrong-doing, obscures the consciousness which the wrong-doer had of the relation in which he stood to the Law and its source, bringing in chaos, as well as turning things upside down. Nevertheless evil is not a positive substance or entity. Transgression, as the word implies, is due to the excess of a thing that is in itself good—originally and naturally good; but every act, by which the human spirit steps across the boundary of the mean —which was so admirably wrought out by Aristotle in his Ethics—is an act of transgression. It obscures his consciousness of, and for the time being affects his relation to, the Being from whom the law emanates, and of whose character it is the expression. It does not follow from this, however, that

evil can ever itself become a substance, or thing in itself—a *Ding-an-sich*, to use the Kantian term—an essence external to the will of the agent; or a substance that can increase, and multiply, and have a realm of its own.

It is important to observe what follows from this. What has just been stated might seem at first to minimise the nature of evil; but, since as it represents it as the inroad into human nature of an element which has no natural affinity with man, and is not a necessary part of his constitution, it holds out the prospect of its separation from his nature, and its possible extinction. If we believe that evil is a positive substance within the universe, we must believe it to be an eternal element there, which can never be eliminated. But if it be—as St. Augustine taught—essentially a "privation" or defect, we may warrantably believe that it has no real or necessary affinity with us, and may therefore hope for its ultimate removal, and entire abolition. The way in which the Christian Ethic endeavours to

eliminate it—*viz.*, by the "expulsive power" of a new emotion or affection—we shall consider later on.

(2) The next point to be noticed is that the Christian Ethic reduced the various forms of moral evil to the common principle of selfishness; and that, by so doing, it gave to the world a very large and fruitful moral generalisation. It showed—as no other system has shown—that whenever a man transgresses, he is selfish; and also that, in being selfish, he is suicidal, that he ultimately injures himself. Contrariwise, that when we forget ourselves, and find our duties multiply as our relations to others increase, we escape from the thraldom of evil; that, while our acts of service to others increase, instead of being fettered by them, we are more and more emancipated, being freed from the bondage of a merely personal life. In other words, according to the Christian Ethic, concentration upon self is always tyrannical; while the "service" of others is "perfect freedom". Christianity has taught the world

that all transgression, if we trace it to its root, is—in one form or another—an act of selfishness. Outbursts of passion and temper, for example, show that we have exaggerated ideas of our own importance; disregard for the feelings of others invariably arises from an inordinate fondness for one's own; envy and jealousy have the same root; while all excess in the indulgence of appetite, desire, or emotion, is equally—and even more obviously—a form of selfishness.

Before passing from this, it may be added that, while all evil may be traced back to selfishness of one kind or another, it is quite possible to deny self, without doing it from a moral motive, or for a moral end. In other words, there may be a selfish denial of self. The worth of any act which suppresses self depends upon the worthiness of the end beyond self, contemplated by it; for example, whether it be the good of another, or his or her selfish pleasure. Some persons have been known to deny themselves in the spirit of the miser, in order that their families might have

more to spend upon themselves. An ascetic life of self-crucifixion may be very much easier to some persons than the self-discipline, which knows how to use the world without abusing it, and which follows to its end the ideal of self-development, through all hindrance and difficulty, with a disinterested view to the ultimate good of others.

(3) As to the relative magnitude, and the moral import, of the various faults and transgressions which human nature exhibits, although we have no list of them drawn out in detail in the Christian Ethic—any more than we have an elaborate list of the virtues, such as Aristotle attempts—we have certain distinctions drawn which are of vast moment, and perhaps of greater value than any that are to be found in Aristotle. Such, for example, as the following: Hatred, malice, vindictiveness, revenge, hypocrisy, and perfidy are branded in the Christian Ethic with a far deeper stigma, than those faults which are due to mere frailty of moral feeling, to feebleness of will, or the impulses of passion.

The Christian Ethic palliates none of these; it makes light of no moral fault, but it distinguishes things that differ. It condemns the Pharisee, more than the publican; the self-righteous, and the self-sufficient, more than the frail. Christendom has not as yet perhaps fully learned this lesson, which was given to it nineteen hundred years ago. Certainly it does not always practise it, because the judgments meted out against the latter class of faults are frequently far too severe, while the former are practised by those who condemn the latter, with inconsistent frequency.

(4) The next point is the attitude which the Christian Ethic assumes toward transgression, in contrast with its attitude toward the transgressor. There is no laxity toward the former; but there is unlimited forbearance and charity toward the latter. Its relation to the one is antithetic, in the severest form; while to the other it is sympathetic, in the very tenderest degree. In the Christian Ethic, as unfolded in the words and deeds of

Christ, we find an uncompromising rigour and hostility toward everything base; but we also find a new and marvellous clemency, a unique graciousness of action toward those who have been the victims of evil. To put it otherwise, if Christ surpassed all other moralists in the stringency of his ideal, He was the first moralist who divinely relented toward the offender; and He made the force of the moral law more binding through his very graciousness of action—the two things going on together simultaneously.

It is easy to see how, out of the union of these two things, would arise his hopeful attitude towards mankind. There is no trace in anything He said or did of the desponding cry that "all things are out of joint"—no touch of that pessimism which abandons itself to a belief in the necessity of evil, or of that cynicism that scorns what it cannot cure —but there is everywhere the very radiance of hope in reference to mankind at large, and the patience of hope in following out the case of each individual man, woman, and child.

In the same connection we should note his calm confidence in the final coming of the Kingdom of Righteousness, or the victory of moral order in the world, which grew stronger as the sorrows of his personal life increased, and its tragedy was consummated.

CHAPTER V.

ASPECTS OF DUTY.

FROM the points in the Christian Ethic as to the nature and characteristics of evil I pass to its teaching in reference to Duty, its interpretation of Duty, and the mutual relation of the several duties. To take the last of these first.

(1) Having already seen how it unified the various forms of evil, we may now note how it distinguishes the separate duties. It is specially clear in the distinction it draws between the eternal and the temporal in duty, in other words between rules of right and ceremonial statutes. It contrasts, as no previous Ethic had done, things which are wrong in themselves, and things which are prohibited for a purpose; in other words, moral faults and ritual offences. It threw special emphasis on the difference between those imperial

laws, which are meant to govern the whole universe of moral agency, and the provincial edicts which have been issued for a time, or for a race. This was a new kind of teaching, although the way had been prepared for it by some of the seers in Palestine, and in Greece —the teaching that put morality always in the foreground and ceremony always in the background, and which did this with a precision that was consistent from first to last. In this connection we must not forget that there has been sometimes a contrast between Christian Ethics and the Ethics of Christ, because many of the systems professedly Christian—and certainly many of the sects—have just reversed the process, putting ceremonial in the foreground, and leaving morality out of view.

(2) A second point, in the teaching of Christianity as to Duty, is its positive character, in contrast with the negative spirit of former systems. It changed the "thou shalt not" of the old morality into the "thou shalt" of the new. No one can read the New Testament without perceiving that the attitude of

Christianity as to Duty is entirely different from the Hebraic negativeness; and in this respect, the Sermon on the Mount is only a sample of what pervades all the recorded parables, addresses, and conversations. A large part of ancient virtue,—whether Greek, or Roman, or Hebrew,—consisted in abstinence from evil, rather than in the practice of good. The Christian Ethic, on the other hand, changed the moral code from a series of prohibitions into a set of demands; its aim being not so much to curb the evil in man, as to evoke the good, and to quicken into life every latent germ or seed of righteousness.

(3) In the next place, this positive law of Duty is, in the Christian Ethic, connected with a personal Lawgiver revealed in conscience. Christianity does not attempt to prove this; it merely asserts it. It appeals to it as a fact which can be experientially known by the intuition of the unsophisticated heart. It affirms that man is not a law unto himself, but that he can find within his own nature a law superior to himself—a law that

is "in him, yet not of him"—not that he is under a law which his own will has imposed upon itself, (which was Kant's theory); or one which external secular authority equal to his own has imposed upon him, (which was Hobbes's theory). He is under law to the God revealed to him in conscience; but this may be interpreted as his own highest self, in its highest possible act, recognising the presence, and bowing before the authority, of the Divine within it. Christianity thus interprets the whispers of the human conscience. They are, on the one hand, "the voice of one crying in the wilderness" of human nature, "prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert" (of your hearts) "an highway for your God"; and that is, in other words to say they are the utterances of unrest, showing that man's nature is disordered, and that it needs readjustment. But they are, on the other hand, the voice of one saying "Lo! I come" to do this very thing, to prepare the highway for you, to reorganise your nature,

and reclaim it for the right and the true. This theistic interpretation of conscience changes it from the rigid and even frigid thing which it is in many systems, from its being a cold moral imperative—as in the Stoic, and even in the Kantian Ethic—into a living commandment, emanating from an eternal source which is, at one and the same time, within ourselves, and yet above us all.

(4) In virtue of the close link which Christianity thus establishes between morality and religion, it will be seen that the Founder of Christianity stands to Christendom in a relation quite different to that in which the founders of the sects of Philosophy, and of the schools of Art and Science, stand to their disciples. The greatest teachers of antiquity sought to develop in their pupils a principle which would in time make them independent of their preceptor, if possible, wiser than he had been ; and part of the instruction given in the nobler schools was to rise superior even to its own tradition, relying on the progress of rational light. But almost the final word of

the Founder of Christianity to his followers proclaimed their dependence upon Himself—"without me ye can do nothing"—even while He told them that it was expedient that He should leave them personally. Thus the personality of the Teacher became the centre and focus of the Christian Ethic.

CHAPTER VI.

THE UNIVERSAL AIM OF CHRISTIANITY.

THE universal aim of Christianity has been already alluded to, but, as this is a point of special importance in weighing its moral significance, it may be assigned a place of its own as a sixth feature in the Christian Ethic.

The point to be signalised is this. The Christian religion was not deposited in the minds and hearts of a few initiated followers, that it might grow up as a body of doctrine to be professed by them esoterically, cherished within the precincts of a select school, and by a select body of men. It was meant, on the contrary, to be both a Religion and a Life for all mankind, a morality for the race at large. It was meant to abolish the exclusiveness of privileged orders, to overthrow their caste, to break down the barriers between alien races,

and to unite men of the most diverse tendencies in one vast human brotherhood; and it entered upon its mission with what was—despite occasional excesses—a sublime propagandist ardour.

The second feature in the Christian Ethic—already partially discussed—was its doctrine of the brotherhood of the human race. What is now referred to is not to be identified with that. It is rather its missionary attitude, and its being intended for the whole world; a Religion and an Ethic meant to unite men in fellowship with one another, by first uniting them to God, and by disclosing their common relationship to the Infinite. We need not ask, in this connection, if it has always succeeded in doing so; because no religion has as yet been universally recognised; and possibly none will ever be universally adopted, in external form. At the same time, the spirit of the Christian Ethic has entered as a leaven, into every type of civilisation which has become aware of its existence; and it is by such a process of

leavening, and not by mere formal intellectual assent, or doctrinal allegiance, that its successes are to be computed.

If, now, we look at the characteristics of the Christian Ethic, and after comparing them with the characteristics of any other great system of antiquity, ask which is the more cosmopolitan—which is for a time, and which for all time—the answer is not difficult to find. Plato was essentially Greek, Aristotle —in his Ethic at least—was distinctively Athenian. The Stoics, with all their cosmopolitanism, were shut up, austerely though nobly, within themselves. Buddha was of the East; Zoroaster was Persian to the core; while the greatest of the Hebrew prophets was essentially Semitic, with a local colour in his moral teaching and aspiration. In contrast with all this, when reading the early Christian documents, and breathing the atmosphere of the first Christian age, we find that we have come into a moral territory, which has a far wider area, a larger scope, and a much richer adaptability. There is

no phase of our perplexed modern life, for example, to which Christianity has not something directly to contribute. In this connection it may be noted how it addresses each one individually, without the intervention of a class. The Christian "sacerdos" is not the member of a privileged class, who is able to lift responsibility from the individual, opening to him the gates of the kingdom of heaven, and dispensing its favours mechanically. Some sects in Christendom have claimed this sacerdotal power; but the claim is a corruption of the Christian Ethic, which has no place in its constitution, is alien to its spirit, and inconsistent with its genius. In the union of these things—the universal mission to all mankind, the appeal to the special wants of each individual, and the assertion of the direct moral responsibility of each to God—the Christian Ethic is absolutely unique.

CHAPTER VII.

VIRTUES WHICH ARE A DEVELOPMENT OF THE CHARACTER OF CHRIST.

We now enter upon the consideration of a class of virtues which date from the commencement of the Christian era, in a sense in which those already considered do not, *viz.*, those which are more distinctively a reflection of the character of the Founder of Christendom; and which are, in a specific sense, Christian virtues. They were not absolutely new creations, from root to branch, never seen in rudimentary germ elsewhere; but, in their developed form, they are distinctively new, because their development has been the result of Christian influence alone. Several of them have sprung up (to speak in a figure), only under the sunlight and the warmth of that group of truths already mentioned. Others, which had a place in earlier systems, when transplanted to the

Christian soil, have assumed new form and colour. They have been enlarged, strengthened, and glorified by their new alliances. As flowers, when taken from a wilderness to garden-ground, undergo a change in many of their features—and sometimes even evolve a new type of beauty—so the character of the virtues which men practise alters, in the course of their alliance with others. Here we may fearlessly apply the principle of evolution. It is by innumerable minute changes, and the ceaseless play of multitudinous forces in the natural world, that new organisms are developed; and it is by similarly minute and imperceptible changes that human character is evolved. The blending of the streams of influence that form it is incessant; and it sometimes happens that, in the course of the process, an old virtue is so completely transformed as to be almost unrecognisable.*

Suppose a cultivated Athenian youth in the first Christian century—who had been

* See Appendix ii., "The Correlation of the Moral Forces" (p. 159).

educated in the Academic or Stoical Philosophy, and had consistently practised the virtues of these systems—to have embraced Christianity on conviction, what would happen? The old virtues of his Academic or Stoical novitiate would not be uprooted, or extinguished. He would continue to practise them, but they would immediately undergo a transformation. It is possible that, for a time, they would have no special interest to him, because of the new attraction he had found in Christianity; but he could never despise them, if his life had been either noble or genuine before. To have done so would have been to act the part of a traitor; and to be disloyal, not only to his past career, but to the Divinity working within him. The old virtues would be displaced, but not destroyed; and the Christian Ethic came, to the disciples of earlier systems, "not to destroy, but to fulfil" —in other words to evoke the good it found, and to transfigure it by its alliance with other truths which it disclosed, and the fresh life it unfolded.

It might be difficult, or perhaps impossible, for such a disciple—if he raised the question, long after he had embraced Christianity—to tell how much he owed to it, and how much to the earlier training of his youth. His enthusiasm and sense of supreme indebtedness, might lead him to say—in a strain of happy hyperbole—that he owed everything to the later gift; but our most valuable inheritances are always the most subtle ones. They cannot be split up into bits and parcels, and set down so much to this and so much to that antecedent influence. While, therefore, he would be conscious of debts—spreading over a wide area, and reaching him from many sources—he would know in particular that his life had been touched to new and to fine issues by the incoming of the Christian Ethic. Although he had never seen its Founder, the influence of his personality would be felt in many ways, creating new thoughts, feelings, and actions, while it re-created old ones.

We have already noted one intellectual

feature, in the message of Christianity to the world, *viz.*, its proclamation of the essential unity of God and man. In other words, the remoteness of the one from the other, and the supposed chasm between them, was bridged over, not by a mere announcement of their identity, but by an exhibition of it, as that identity came to light in the life of its Founder. Heaven was revealed upon earth in Him.

Ancient philosophy had been striving to abolish the antagonism between the lower and the higher elements in man—to conquer the dualism of nature and the supernatural, and to reconcile the human with the Divine. It had failed. Christianity was a new answer to that question of the ages: "How can these two be reconciled?" It reconciled them, by making them one. It ended the discord, and took away the sense of separation, by disclosing a higher unity underlying them. In ancient Metaphysic there was an unbridged chasm between the ideal and the real: and in ancient Ethics

there was "a great gulf fixed" between the human and the Divine. Both of them were removed by Christianity, in its exhibition of the union of nature and the supernatural. Suppressing neither element, but conserving each, it abolished their antagonism.

This was effected in and by the life of its Founder, and the corollary is significant. It is that his relation to the human race is an exceptional one; and that the relation of Christendom to Him is a relation of exceptional indebtedness. The recognition of this fact will develop a certain type of character in those who recognise it, and this type will be distinctively Christian.

There is an important difference, however, between the type of virtue thus arising and that which arose from direct contact with the personality of Christ (such as occurred in his lifetime), and also between it and that which is due to the unconscious breathing of the atmosphere in which Christendom now lives and has its being. The contrast is this.

The virtues, which arise from contact with

personality, are always more intense and glowing than the others are. They are not intellectual features of temperament, but moral excellencies of character; and, as a consequence, they rouse to practical action, in a way that the former never do. It is this class of virtues which we have now to consider, *viz.*, those distinctive ones which were first seen in the unique life of the Founder and Master of Christendom, and which, ever since his departure, have been leavening the life of the human race.

Before mentioning them in detail it may be noted that the Christian Ethic is, in one sense, just the development of that which existed in the life of its Founder, its continuation, expansion, and fruition; and it is for this reason that the story of his life is of such value to the world, every incident which reveals it being full of the profoundest ethical significance to posterity. The influence of his character—transmitted not mechanically but vitally—works on in the world, as a permanent element in its civilisa-

tion; while those who are indebted to it are sometimes entirely ignorant of its source. The difference between the type of character, which results from a recognition of truths distinctive of Christianity, and that which results from the moral assimilation and reproduction of its spirit, will thus be apparent. The latter is so peculiarly the type of Christian virtue that the very motto of its Ethic might be: "Let the same mind be in you that was also in the Founder of your faith".

CHAPTER VIII.

SELF-SUFFICIENCE AND HUMILITY.

WHAT then were the virtues which distinguished that life, and have therefore become cardinal elements in the Christian code? The late Dean of Westminster once described the virtues of the Roman world as patriotism and imperial courage; those of Palestine as resignation, reverence, and faith; those of Christianity as universal kindness, consecration, sincerity, and humility. It was a suggestive classification of the various elements in each, but perhaps the latter list may be made somewhat larger.

Before expanding it, however, two things may be noted. The first is that many of the Christian virtues shade into one another, by fine and delicate gradations, so that they are at times difficult to distinguish; and we are even liable to error by a cross-division, or

repetition of them. Whenever the leaven of the Christian Ethic enters into a character that was previously uninfluenced by it, a new development takes place; and thus, there may be almost as many virtues as there are moral situations, each differing only by the finest shade from those which border it, or are allied to it. This is a point of much importance practically; because, in our judgment of others, we often imagine things to be awanting which are really present in another form. They are transformed, through the correlation of the Christian moral forces; and they may be strange to our eye, merely because the character in which they exist is very different from our own. The immense variety in the type of these Christian virtues is sometimes puzzling to the novice, and may be "a stone of stumbling" to the uninitiated.

The second prefatory remark bears upon the whole group of the Christian virtues, *viz.*, that they exhibit *a harmony of opposites;* that is to say, many principles or tendencies, which were antagonistic in earlier systems,

are found to be in unison here. They are brought together at a focus, and are harmonised; while they afterwards appear as complements to one another.

In proceeding now to classify the distinctively Christian virtues, they might be divided, as Aristotle marked out one section of his list; *viz.*, into one group containing the virtues connected with the moral estimate of self, and a second containing those connected with an estimate of others; or the list might be drawn out in a more miscellaneous manner, without regarding this distinction. In what follows, Aristotle's classification will be followed practically, by the statement, in the first place, of two virtues belonging to the former class, *viz.*, the estimate of self; and by proceeding, in the second place, to those connected with our estimate of others. Not to encumber the list, however, with too many sub-divisions, the entire series may be numbered as we proceed, 1, 2, 3, 4, etc.; and two of them will be mentioned in this chapter.

(1) There is the virtue of self-sufficience—

a very different thing from self-sufficingness —the latter being the vice against which the former stands contrasted. This Christian self-sufficience arises out of the relationship to God which Christianity disclosed—all sense of distance being abolished, and the idea of a chasm between the finite and the Infinite removed. As a result of the belief that God is within the individual, so that he has not "to go up into heaven, or to descend into the deep" to find him—there being "no more near nor far"—there arises a self-reliance, which is really a reliance on God, on the Infinite within the finite. This self-sufficience will spring up in every character less or more, in which the union of the Divine and the human is realised, and its apprehension is thorough; the having a root in one's self being due to the fact that we are rooted and grounded in another than self. A noteworthy result ensues. The realisation of a new moral centre at once raises its possessor above the accidents of life, and makes him to a certain extent superior to misfortune. This has a

resemblance to the Greek virtue of ἀυτάρκεια; but it is that old virtue in a new form. It is ἀυτάρκεια glorified and transfigured, in the light of the fact that we "live and move and have our being" in God. This is the first virtue.

The second is its moral opposite, but not its contradictory. It is humility, or a lowly self-estimate, the ταπεινοφροσύνη of the New Testament. If anything approaching to this had been practised in Greece, it would have been considered mean and paltry, or the sign of a craven spirit. Throughout the ancient world it was reckoned a weakness to be humble. The strong were usually arrogant in their strength, and their self-assertion was inconsistent with humility.

Here, however, as in the former case, it is incorrect to say that there was no germ of humility, in the virtue of the ancient world. We have already seen that in Greece, and more especially in Palestine, the germs of that which grew into virtues distinctive of the Christian Ethic—when fostered by its sun-

light and its heat—were occasionally found; but neither the Greek nor the Hebrew virtue was the same as the Christian, for two reasons. In the first place, it had to be shown, by a living example, that the more divine a character was the more profoundly it could stoop; and that the more lofty it was the further it could descend. In the second place, the Christian virtue of humility—or the lowly self-estimate which is conjoined with ἀυτάρκεια—springs from a conviction which we do not find in Greece; although we find it amongst the Jews, expressed frequently in the Psalter, *viz.*, the immense interval between the ideal and the actual, between aspiration and attainment, or intention and realisation. It is to a belief in an infinite standard on the one hand, and on the other to those

> Fallings from us, vanishings,
> Blank misgivings of a creature
> Moving about in worlds not realised,

that we owe this virtue of ἀυτάρκεια. It is not true—as has sometimes been rashly said—that pride was ever exalted to the rank of

a virtue in Greece; but the sober self-estimate, which the Greek moralists inculcate, is a very different thing from the attitude of lowliness, mental and moral—the prostration of self because of faulty practice, or a consciousness of evil and weakness in the will—which is distinctive of the Christian Ethic.

And these two things go together in its moral system. Self-sufficience, or a sense of the worth of the individual from his relation to the Infinite—which is really a reliance on God within man—and humility deepening into a sense of humiliation, because of unworthiness, failure, and demerit. Each of these, thus united, enhances the other. They are like the light and the shadow, the latter of which is keen in proportion to the intensity of the former; or, like the mountain and the valley, the one of which is deep because of the height of the other.

It may further be noted that, in its finest phases, the virtue of humility arises not so much from an examination of one's own character, leading to the conclusion that one

has seriously failed. Such introspection is not always healthful, and it often becomes morbid. Humility in self-estimate is not due to the fact that one has been carrying on a process of analysis, and has found out a long catalogue of defects. It is rather due to the fact that one has not been thinking of self at all, but has rather begun to think of others, and in some degree to live for them. Here again we may note the harmony and unity of these virtues, and how naturally one of them leads on to another. Self-sacrifice for others, whenever it takes possession of an individual, leaves little time for reflex thought about one's self; and it thus breeds the noblest kind of humility.

Before leaving these two virtues, which bear upon an estimate of self, it need hardly be remarked that each of them if pushed out of its place—or pushed across the mean—degenerates easily into a vice. All the virtues may thus degenerate and become vices, as Aristotle has very clearly shown. It is important, however, to note what the vices

are to which these virtues lead when they are in excess. The one—that of self-sufficience—if too intense, or if it stands alone, rises into haughtiness, or the vice of pride. The other—the virtue of humility—if too intense, or if it stands alone, sinks into weak-mindedness, or the vice of morbid self-prostration.

So far the two virtues which belong to, or arise out of, the estimate of self.

CHAPTER IX.

DEVOTION TO OTHERS.

THE third virtue in this second branch of the Christian Ethic, is one which carries the individual away from self altogether. It is that of love for and devotion to others, arising out of a recognition both of their worth and their needs; the relation of all to the Infinite being the same, and all being members of a single family. If in human nature there be but one body corporate, with many members—each different from the rest, and having wants which only others can supply—it is clear that each is intended to aid the rest, as opportunity arises. This virtue is the ἀγάπη of the New Testament. It is not so much the glorification of the Greek ἔρως, as its complete transfiguration. It has its intellectual root in the recognition of the common relation of all to God, and in

that brotherhood of the race already referred to.

Here again it is desirable to note the relation of virtue to virtue in the Christian Ethic. As it manifests itself in experience, the one we are now considering is a purely unselfish virtue. When genuine it is never practised because it is a pleasant thing to practise it, or because of the delight arising from the fellowship of kindred minds and hearts. It is rather because we are units in a corporate body, in which "the hand cannot say to the eye I have no need of thee, nor the head to the foot I have no need of you"; in other words it is due to what is aptly called the solidarity of the race. In this solidarity we find the intellectual root of the moral virtue; and the realisation of the common relation of all to the Infinite may render some of the more difficult tasks of philanthropy easier. Most persons, however, are stirred up to the practice of these duties, simply by the presence of evil around them. The discovery of ignorance and misery, of pain, sorrow and loss, arouses

in all genuine and unsophisticated hearts the desire to render help, and, if possible, to relieve. This may be said to be the chief centrifugal force in human nature, which carries us out from ourselves, and counteracts the centripetal force which carries us inwards. These two forces, working in harmony, keep human nature turning on its axis, so to speak, and revolving around the sun of the Christian moral system.

It may be noted at this stage how different the virtue we are considering is from the highest form of its antecedent germ in the Greek ethic, *viz.*, the Platonic. It is not due to mere intellectual admiration, although admiration may foster and expand it. It is not to be confounded with that noble friendship which existed in the Pythagorean brotherhood, and was a cementing bond in the freemasonry of Plato's Republic. It is an emotion that is quickened into life by a perception of the losses and evils of which others are the victims; and its outcome in all its nobler forms is a moral fire of enthusiastic

devotion to them, which leads to the giving up of time, ease, and personal enjoyment, in order to remedy losses, to avert evil, and to mitigate disaster.

The virtue we have been considering is a direct result of the practice of what Christianity calls the second of the "great commandments," *viz.*, love to man; but we may sub-divide it, because its ramifications are numerous, and branch out into many separate virtues in detail.

(1) There is, first of all, a regard for human life as such, a recognition of the sacredness of life. If the phrase, made use of by the early Christian writers, that we are temples in which Divinity may dwell, be a valid figure of speech; or if, to change the illustration, within the body of every slave some fragment of a divine original lies hid—a likeness which may be deciphered, by those who have the eye to see it, as a palimpsest is read through all the erasures and disfigurements of copyists—this idea at once enhances the sacredness of human life as such. Under the

earlier civilisations the value of life was scarcely recognised. The slaughter of thousands of human beings was little thought of, and the reckless expenditure of life was witnessed with comparative indifference even by the educated classes. However else they might be regarded, the masses were at least good fighting material, and their military value was reckoned up with far more callousness than Napoleon was in the habit of estimating his battalions. It is difficult for the modern world to realise the indifference to physical life which existed in ancient times. In many tribes, before a youth was allowed to marry he had to kill some one, in order to prove his courage, an enemy if possible; but, if no enemy was at hand, then the first person he came across. We see something like this still existing amongst contemporary savages; but, so far as it has departed from our western civilisation, its departure is most certainly due to the introduction of the Christian Ethic. The reckless waste of human life—which was a widespread vice in ancient times—has been

supplanted to a large extent in Europe by the recognition of the value of life; and this has introduced a new element into warfare, in so far as it has turned the brutal strife of savages into wars of chivalry.

(2) Secondly, we find in the Christian Ethic a new estimate of, and reverence for, the body as the ally of the soul. The Christian Ethic has also taught us to think little of the body, and its wants, subordinating these to the higher interests of the spirit; but there is at the same time a reverence for the body, which is one of the main safeguards of virtue. That attention to it, and care for it, which Christianity inculcates—while they are the very opposite of senseless devotion to it—are undoubted virtues, which lead on to much else that is good. *E.g.*, the maintenance of physical health and bodily vigour—so far as practicable—is a duty, no less than the maintenance of moral and mental health. This was doubtless recognised, and even emphasised, in the Hellenic ideal of many-sided culture; but there were many elements at work

in the Greek world, which were antagonistic to it. The Cynic and the Stoic teaching opposed it; and asceticism, in all its phases, is alien to that harmony of body and soul, which is a root-principle in the Christian Ethic.

(3) In the third place, there is the recognition of woman as man's equal, and not his slave; the equality of the sexes, not in the sense that everything should be equalised—because in that case we would live in the most dreary world of monotony and commonplace—but in the sense that equal rights and duties should be recognised, and provision made for their accomplishment. To what source does the modern world owe this idea, and its gradual though tardy realisation? It is almost entirely the product of the Christian Ethic, and to the leaven of its moral ideal, mingling with and helping forward the general progress of the race. In Greece—the land of ancient splendour, and intellectual renown—women had scarcely any sphere except the domestic one, which was "cabined cribbed confined" within a monotonous round.

There were certainly some cultivated women in Greece; poets, artists, and even philosophers. The same is true of other countries; but it was not until the leaven of the Christian Ethic had time to permeate the world, and to transform its earlier ideals, that anything like justice was done to women. It is only quite recently that approximate justice has been done to them in some directions, and more is perhaps to follow; but the improvement of their position in the modern world—while partly due to the general progress of enlightenment, partly to their own proved capacity for higher things, and the achievements they have won for themselves—is mainly the result of silent influences, which have emanated from the fountainhead.

(4) A fourth element in the Christian Ethic —under this head—is its regard for Humanity in the two extremes of feebleness; for old age on the one hand, and for childhood on the other. We may not forget that, in the *De Senectute* and elsewhere, there are many noble

things said of Age, and of what the aged can be and do; but the common feeling of antiquity beyond the Christian frontier was that the aged were burdens, or cumberers of the ground, their time being past; and so, indifference to them was common. On the other hand, children were felt to be incapable of anything that was worth taking note of. The idea that those in middle life, or in the full vigour of their powers, had anything to learn from old age—that the period of the decline of life should have a special lesson for manhood, and that there was a duty which the younger generation owed to the elder—these were new to the world at the incoming of the Christian Ethic. In the case of children, it seemed almost absurd that their seniors could learn anything from them, until the world had experience of a Divine Childhood; but since then it may be truly said of Christendom that "a little child has led it". This is a distinctive feature of the Christian Ethic. Not only parents, but all men and women may be taught the pro-

foundest lessons by the ordinary life of children, their guileless unsophisticated ways, their innocent gladness, their dependence, and their trustfulness.

(5) A fifth point is regard for the weak and the unprotected, for those who are beneath us in the accident of fortune. Goethe contrasted the Christian with other religions on the ground of its reverence for what is beneath us; others inculcating reverence for what is above us, and for what is on our own level; Christianity showing—for the first time in History—reverence for what is underneath, or lower than ourselves. It was a poor analysis, if meant to signalise the central feature of Christianity; but, it certainly threw emphasis on a real feature of it. And under it, widened out—as Goethe himself would probably have widened it—we must include regard for creatures other than the human, sympathy for example with the brute creation. To what do we owe our "Societies for the prevention of cruelty to animals"? They are a purely Christian

development. What is expressed in the lines—

> He prayeth best, who loveth best,
> All things both great and small;
> For the dear God, who loveth us,
> He made and loveth all,

is a distinctive outgrowth of the ethics of Christianity.

CHAPTER X.

SOCIAL EQUALITY; CHRISTIAN SOCIALISM; PHILANTHROPY.

A PLACE by itself in the Christian Ethic ought perhaps to be given to the special way in which it recognises the fundamental equality of men—in so far as they share a common nature and inheritance—an idea which, more than anything else, has given a progressive death-blow both to the caste and the slavery of the world. This, however, must not be identified with the motto inscribed on the socialistic banner. It is a truth without any political significance whatsoever, and it may be held as firmly by the most advanced Liberal as by the most Conservative partisan. It may be equally recognised in both the great political organisations, which have throughout the ages competed for the suffrage of mankind; and each of these errs, if it arrogates to itself exclusively

any one of the distinctive features of the Christian religion.

The historic fact to be noted is that this idea of the fundamental equality of men—when one goes beneath accidental differences and social distinctions—has dealt, and was intended to deal, the death-blow already referred to. It is of course unhappily true that the odious spirit of caste still lingers in many quarters; and that, in some of its worst features, it mars the catholicity of Christendom. There is perhaps no greater hindrance to the development of the Christian Ethic than the obstinacy with which this spirit clings to certain sects and coteries, and even tarnishes the religious life of thousands. There are some persons who would rather renounce religion, than come into close quarters with the poor and the degraded, if it involved subsequent toil in their behalf. They act as if there was, if not a separate religion, at least a distinct ritual or religious service for them, and another for the poor and the vulgar. Notwithstanding of this—

lamentable enough as a fact—it remains true, that by the entrance of Christianity into the world, and by the special genius of this religion, the principle of caste has been broken down. It has been destroyed by that element in the Christian Ethic which has made it true—as a great religious writer puts it—that "in the heraldry of the universe, the blood of Agamemnon is less noble than the spirit of the saint".

The equality referred to under this head is not advanced in the spirit of that Communism, of which the watchword is: Take from others, level down, and thus make all men equal. Its watchword is not 'take from,' but 'give to' others. The maxim of Communism is: "Take from him who has more than you, and equalise all men as citizens of the world". That of the Christian Ethic is: "Give to him who has less than you, and thus equalise all as brethren in one family". The one advocates reduction and diminution, levelling uniformly down; the other advocates enlargement and expansion, levelling up con-

tinuously. There is surely an important difference between these two things. In this connection it is worthy of note that a sentence—recorded by St. Paul as having been spoken, on an occasion of which he gives us no particulars,—is really one of the central mottoes of the Christian Religion, because it embodies one of its most characteristic principles. The saying is: "It is more blessed to give than to receive". It is obvious that one must *have* something, before he is in a position to *give* anything away. Just as one must cultivate himself, in order to be able to transcend himself,—in other words, in order to any self-sacrifice worthy of the name—so, he must possess, before he can confer. One characteristic of the Christian Ethic however is this, that it regulates both the process of acquisition and the act of bestowment; or, the temporary retention, and the ultimate giving away, both of what we are, and of what we have.

Another point to be noted, under this head,

is the peculiar kind of interest in others, and regard for them, which has led to the organised philanthropy of the world, *viz.*, *the love of the unlovely.* It is a distinctive feature in the Christian Ethic, which has fed the stream of all its charities, constantly and unobtrusively. When it has become intense and glowing, this same characteristic has been the parent of almost all the remedial institutions of the modern world.

It is sometimes forgotten that the hospital, the asylum, the reformatory, the convalescent home, the orphanage, and even "unions" for the poor are all distinctively Christian institutions; while the gaol, and the prison, are distinctively pagan. This is not said in any disparagement of the latter. Far from it; first, because we owe so many good things to Paganism; and, secondly, because the gaol is still quite as much needed, as the hospital or the reformatory is! But the difference is this, that the conception of punishment—a necessary one doubtless—lies at the root of the gaol; while the conception of recovery,

or restoration, lies at the root of the reformatory.*

Another thing to be noted is the spirit in which all this interest in others, and work on their behalf, is to be carried on. The spirit of the Christian Ethic in philanthropic work is this: "Do good from the love of doing it, from the desire to help others, hoping for nothing in return". The work has to be done not from the hope of reward—which would

* I do not forget that there were asylums for the insane amongst the Moslems: and that in ancient Egypt, in India, in China, and even in Mexico, we find dispensaries; (although only one is recorded in Greece). But these remedial institutions were not the dominant note or characteristic of any type of civilisation before Christ; and the difference between those which did exist anterior to the Christian era, and those which arose subsequently and were created by it, is best seen when we come to the fourth century, and find the noble Roman Lady Fabiola devoting her great fortune for the building of the first great Νοσοκομεῖον, or infirmary for the poor and homeless sick. The act was contagious, and creative of a new type of beneficence; leading St. Basil to build his magnificent hospital at Cæsarea in Cappadocia, and to there being at Constantinople in St. Chrysostom's time as many as 600 trained nurses for the sick.

tarnish it from root to branch—but from the desire to increase the sum total of good in the world, rejoicing in its increase, and glad that one is privileged to be an instrument in its accomplishment; a concurrent motive being the honour of admission into the rank of workers in the great hierarchy—a satisfaction always serene, in proportion as the doer of the work forgets that he has done it.

This is not meant to extinguish interest in one's self, or in the aims and ambitions which are strictly personal. In this respect—as in so many others—Christianity did not "come to destroy, but to fulfil". It may even be granted that, when living for others extinguishes all life for self,—or, to adopt the technical language of the hour, when altruism so completely conquers egoism as to annihilate it—the very principle, thus vainly glorified, breaks down and disappears. If every person in the world lived exclusively for every one else, there would be a speedy end to self-sacrifice. If each one tried to subordinate or to eliminate himself, with the view of

helping others, who would remain in the position, not of the helper, but of the helped? Not one. The very virtue would be evolved out of existence!

But further, as we do not always succeed in knowing what is best for ourselves, it is not likely that we shall succeed—*i.e.*, if we attempt to practise this utopian plan of living for others exclusively—first, in knowing what is best for them, and secondly, in carrying it out. Most of us come to rash conclusions as to what it is best for other lives to achieve; because, in the first instance, we make crude guesses as to what they really are. It may perhaps be said that it is impossible for any one—however nearly related, by ties of blood or of friendship—to know what is the noblest ideal of life, for any other human being; although by slow degrees he may surmise what is best for himself. In any case however unless he begins by having, not only some interest in, but also a very considerable regard for, himself, he is totally unfitted for being either a guide or a help to others. In giving

advice of any kind, the adviser is presumed to have passed through an ordeal of some kind, the experience of which warrants him in offering it. It is only because he has found it advantageous to himself, or to others, that he is justified in giving it: but he is always liable to err, and can never be sure that his advice is wholly wise.

Let it be granted that "he who loses his life saves it," and that "he who saves his life loses it"; the saving, at the cost of losing, implies that the life itself was worth saving, and was therefore possessed of intrinsic value. No human being is called upon, by the Christian Ethic, to sacrifice himself *entirely* for the sake of others. So far as he is summoned to practise self-denial, it is in a social, fraternal, or communistic interest; and it is a sacrifice meant to destroy the baser self, while it expands and enriches the higher. It is indeed self-evident that a doctrine of self-sacrifice which ends in the collapse and disintegration of human character, is *felo de se*. It may even be characterised as intellectual imbecility, and

moral lunacy; because to conserve and develop, to strengthen and enrich individual character is the very highest ethical end; while, at the same time, the conservation and development, the strengthening and enrichment of other lives is secured by means of it.

It may also be noted that the highest feature or characteristic of the Infinite, disclosed to the world in Christianity, *viz.*, the act of descending to the finite—a descent, with a view to a subsequent ascent, along with the finite—has in turn created a new type of virtue in the life of the finite. If, as already indicated, it may be taken as a rule of the brotherhood, "Let the same mind be in you that was also in your Founder," the living for others—stooping to them in incessant acts of service, spending effort, and "being spent," in toil on their behalf—is at once raised to the position of a cardinal virtue in the Christian code. Such altruism becomes an instinctive, as well as an elemental, principle of life.

CHAPTER XI.

THE FORGIVENESS OF INJURIES.

We come now to a virtue which may in one sense, like the preceding ones, be deduced from the general principle of love to one's neighbour—so comprehensive a virtue is that which the Christian Ethic calls the "second great commandment"; although it seems better to give this virtue a place by itself, both from its importance, and from its having manifold phases and ramifications.

It is the virtue of forgiveness, the forgiveness of injury. It is obvious that this might be regarded, either as a corollary, or as the outcome, of "loving our neighbour, as we love ourselves"; for we could not do this, *i.e.*, we could not love our neighbour fully and genuinely, without forgiving him; but then, the act of forgiveness, and still more its spirit and temper, is so different from other

aspects which the love of one's neighbour assumes, that this imperial virtue deserves to occupy a place of its own, in the general hierarchy.

As in the case of the virtue of humility, already referred to, it is to be noted, in the *first* place, that we find illustrations and traces of it before the Christian era, and beyond its frontier. It is commended in classical literature. We find it referred to by Plato, Aristotle, Epictetus, and Plutarch. But the difference between the virtue, as taught and practised in Greece,* and as taught and practised in Christendom is this. A Greek forgave injuries or affronts, either because it annoyed him to be compelled to carry out retaliation, or because he thought it beneath his dignity to do so. It was a worry, a trouble, and a vexation, to take the steps necessary to punish the offender. It interfered with peace of mind ; and thus the root of abstinence from

* See (1) Plutarch's Account of Pericles. (2) Plato's Representation of Socrates in the *Crito*, where he affirms that it is wrong to injure those who injure us.

revenge was ἀταραξία, or the love of ease. Anger, on the other hand, was a perturbation of mind, an excitement, the indulgence of which was not "good form," or was unworthy of a noble nature. Now this comes very near to a virtue, but it is not the virtue of the Christian Ethic. The scorn to wrong another, because it is inconsistent with the self-respect of a noble nature, is not the same thing as aversion to it, because of the respect due to one's fellow-men.

In this distinction a *second* aspect of the virtue we are considering comes to light. A negative abstinence from revenge is not the same thing as a positive forgiveness of the injury inflicted. The one is a passive, and the other is an active virtue. Again, the act of forgiveness is practised in Christendom, mainly because an inward moral necessity constrains the agent, irrespective of the merit or the demerit of the objects receiving it. The principle of universal charity includes enemies, as well as friends, within its scope. It matters nothing to one who practises this

virtue what the character of the persons who receive his forgiveness may be—what they have been, or what they have done, in the past. In other words, the bestowal of forgiveness in the Christian Ethic is not based upon the merits of the recipient, but upon the duty of granting forgiveness to every one who may have inflicted an injury, whatever his conduct may have been; and it is practised because the features of a wayward brother are recognised under any wrong done by him. We owe it to the diffusion of this ethic in Christendom, that the old fierceness of human struggle, and the savage reprisals of barbaric life, have been to a great extent abolished. No doubt much of the latter tendency remains, within nations and communities that are nominally Christian; but the higher virtue has, to a large extent, abolished the lower, and pervaded the modern world by its spirit.

A *third* point to be noted under this head is that, according to the Christian Ethic, the virtue is incumbent upon nations in their

corporate capacity, as well as upon sects, communities, and individuals. It is extremely difficult, however, to instil this principle into the mind and heart of any nation. Some, who think it a duty to practise the virtue of forgiveness in their private capacity towards individuals, consider it not only legitimate that one nation should keep up a grudge against another, but that it fosters patriotism to do so. Were this the case, it might be said in reply, "Better that national spirit were extinct; than that the world should continue to practise the revenge, which is supposed to nourish it". It is not necessary, however, that the virtue of patriotism should be extinguished, in order to make room for the one we are now considering. Patriotism, as such, has no necessary connection with revenge; while all its finer features are blunted by the presence of the spirit of retaliation.

A *fourth* point in connection with this virtue of forgiveness is that it is equally incumbent upon all, no one being exempted

from it on the ground of rank, or talent, the amount of debt owing to him, or services rendered by him, or any other reason whatsoever. This universalising of the virtue deepens and intensifies it.

A *fifth* point is that it is incumbent for ever. In other words, we must not only forgive once, and cease to do so, if the offence be repeated; but we must forgive "unto seventy times seven," as the writer of the Gospel puts it. The moral range of the virtue is thus as wide as the Infinite, both in space and in time. It covers all cases, and it is meant to last for ever. As a matter of fact or experience, so soon as it takes hold of a human spirit, it soon shows the signs of immortality. "Many waters cannot quench it." Even the worthlessness of its recipient does not make those who have begun to practise it raise the question *cui bono?* What is the use of continuing it? Its continuance arises out of its very nature.

It may be noted that this feature characterises all the Christian virtues, when they are

genuine. They soon give evidence of their immortality; and this may be explained, either by the fact already mentioned, that it was the Christian religion which first "brought immortality to light"; or by the inherent quality of each virtue, as it springs into being, and is gradually developed. In their purity and genuineness these virtues give evidence that they are not meant for a day, or a year, or an age; but for all time. They thus carry the evidence of their own destiny upbound with them. It must not be imagined from this that they are never changed. Every virtue, and every element in human nature, undergoes incessant modification. At the same time, no virtue ever dies; it is only transformed. If a virtue is to last, it must expand; it cannot therefore remain at a stationary point, or of a uniform character. Stagnation is death; and moral no less than physical life differentiates itself, in a continuous process of change and development. In the course of this transformation of the virtues, inferior elements, which

were present in them—from passing causes, and their relation to the life of sense—are removed; very much as dross is taken away by the refining heat. In the process of what may be called moral alchemy amongst the virtues, it is a property of the fire to harden some things, while it melts others; to consolidate the good, while it consumes the evil. All the Christian virtues, however, are of the asbestos type; which the fire, which tries everything, cannot turn to ashes.

Passing from this, a *sixth* and a much forgotten aspect of the Christian Ethic comes out, not only in granting forgiveness, but in the receiving of it. There are some persons, who are ready enough to forgive others but who are too proud to receive forgiveness themselves. They will not accept it; although they are quite well aware that they have injured those who are willing to forgive them. This may be taken in connection with a maxim already quoted, *viz.*, "it is more blessed to give than to receive". If it be so, one may not "covet earnestly this best gift" for himself alone. He

must rejoice in it, as exercised by others toward himself; that is to say he must be willing to be at times in the inferior position of a receiver, in order that the greater blessedness of a giver may be enjoyed by others. Thus, the whole realm of the Christian commonwealth is bound together, by the reciprocal tie of giving and receiving. The moral agent, who has learned that it is more blessed to give than to receive—and who is practising the virtue—must be equally willing to receive those kindly offices, the giving of which imparts a greater blessedness to others. Why should he monopolise the luxury of giving, and be after all selfish in his beneficence? It is evident that were one to insist on being always the giver, and never the receiver, he would arrogate to himself the higher place or office—a claim that is disallowed by the Christian Ethic.

There is not much likelihood, however, of this kind of selfishness becoming common in Christendom. There are few who try to monopolise the luxury of giving. The

ordinary failing is all the other way, and some do not believe it possible to practise the virtue of giving and receiving unselfishly. Thomas Carlyle once said to me that he did not think there were two men in Christendom, one of whom could give, and the other receive a benefit, without some loss to the moral integrity of both. He thought that the mere act of receiving a favour injured the recipient, either making him craven-spirited, or letting him feel himself an inferior ; while the act of giving similarly injured the giver, by imparting to him a false sense of superiority. This opinion may be based upon a surface truth, but it is a truth which, when pushed to excess, becomes a total falsehood. It is not only possible, it may be quite easy—and even become habitual—to grant a favour without the smallest feeling that by so doing you are making the recipient your debtor, or placing him in a position of inferiority for the time being. And why ? Simply because the Christian virtue we are dealing with does not allow a moment's comparison between one's

self and others. It is an impulse or instinct, which tends toward and rests in others, which is satisfied with the act of bestowment, and has no underlying after-thought tending backward to self. On the other hand—although it is perhaps more difficult—one may receive a favour, and rejoice in it, without the slightest sacrifice of moral integrity. It is a poor kind of pride that leads a man to refuse a benefit, because it won't be said of him that he has been indebted to any one.

Sometimes, however, a dislike to feel—or at any rate to own—indebtedness to other people lingers long in noble natures. Strong men, who glory in the fact that they are "self-made," often wish the fact to be known that they have had no "patrons"; and, in emphasising the fact, they would rather scatter gifts profusely, than receive a single benefit themselves. This, however, is contrary to the spirit of the Christian Ethic, in which a sense of indebtedness is a fundamental element. It is also an inconsistent, if not a foolish, attitude to assume; because

none of us can help being indebted to others. Every moment of our existence we are unconsciously beholden to thousands, who have toiled for us—and whom we cannot recompense—yet, without whose labour, we should neither be where we are, nor what we are.

A special aspect of this virtue of forgiveness—when it has taken real hold of a character, and its practice has become instinctive—should also be noted. Not only is "revenge" a thing unknown, but slights, indignities, and wrongs,—however common in experience, and however much they may for the moment annoy — are immediately ignored. The phrase "a sense of injured innocence," although it expresses what often occurs, expresses what is at once forgotten, and buried out of view. It is at the same time curious, how very slow some people are in learning this virtue, and how late its development often is, in characters otherwise great and noble.

CHAPTER XII.

THE PASSIVE VIRTUES.

LEAVING this great virtue of forgiveness, we now reach an entirely new class of moral qualities, which are due to the leaven of the Christian Ethic. Those belonging to this group have sometimes been called passive virtues, in contrast with the active ones which lead to work, whether for others or for self. It will be observed, however, that while we now come back to strictly personal virtues, they are not exclusively individual : they are rather social, inasmuch as they arise out of the relation in which we stand to one another, as members of the same organism, or human family. It will not be possible to trace them all out in detail, since they assume forms so varied ; but one or two will suffice as a sample of the rest.

Perhaps the chief virtue in the list is that

of patience under suffering; the endurance of pain, for example, without complaint; and —what is to some temperaments much more difficult—the endurance of wrong, without resentment against the doer of it. Patience, while exposed to misrepresentation, and obloquy, or unmerited neglect, is another aspect of the same virtue.

There is no doubt that such virtues were either unknown, or were scarcely known, in Greece. To see how clearly they are a Christian outgrowth we have only to recall the story of that life of sorrow, which taught the world both how to endure loss, and how to be superior to misfortune, how to bear insult and misrepresentation in silence, and how to suffer without a spark of resentment against the person inflicting it. It is a virtue very hard to practise. It is seldom seen in its purity; but, so far as it is seen in Christendom, it is entirely due to its Founder, that the virtue exists, or is practised at all.

CHAPTER XIII.

FARTHER CHARACTERISTICS OF CHRISTIAN VIRTUE.

CERTAIN characteristics, which result from the practice both of the virtues just mentioned, and those discussed before them—features which colour and eradiate all Christian morality—may now be pointed out.

1. The first may perhaps be best described as acting because one is divinely necessitated to act, constrained by a sense of inward honour, and by the feeling so well expressed in the phrase—for which we have no exact equivalent—*noblesse oblige*, impelled by the twofold motive of self-respect and self-forgetfulness. This by degrees imparts an intensity to life's aims, the feeling of being consecrated to great causes, a sense of being not one's own but of being dedicated to what is much nobler than individual or personal interests could ever be, the conviction that one has a purpose to fulfil

which may help forward the general life of the race and lift it upward. It leads one to see that he lives in this world not so much for personal enjoyment as for the general weal, that he exists to carry out the purposes of a great commonwealth, and to advance the welfare of the universal brotherhood. It also tends more and more to self-abnegation; because the particular agency, by which these large ends are accomplished, is felt to be of no consequence so long as the ends themselves are reached. The workers may be ignored, but what of that? It is their ultimate destiny, in any case, to be forgotten; and, so long as the work is *done*, what does it signify by whom it is done, or who gets the credit of doing it? In its nobler forms this virtue—like others we have been considering—is rare in Christendom, but it is one of those which are eminently distinctive of the Christian character.

2. A second characteristic of Christian virtue is this, that very much of it is—to speak in a figure—set, of necessity, in the minor key.

There is a plaintiveness—a sad, and even a sombre tone—occasionally mingled with its joyousness. It has been brought forward as a charge against it that it has an affinity with sadness. In reply to such a charge it need scarcely be said that the Christian Ethic is not out of sympathy with the glad, the bright, and the triumphant elements in human nature, or with the gay and the humorous; but its moral range is very wide, and it makes room for the "miserere nobis," as well as for the "hallelujah chorus". This is an unquestionable sign of the breadth, and not of the narrowness of its sympathy. Its recognition of the alien elements which have marred human nature, the discord and the blight which we formerly considered, is one of the notes of its catholicity. An ethic and a religion, the first and the last notes of which are those of joy exclusively, is less catholic and comprehensive, than one which takes in the sad as well as the joyous elements in existence, and of which the motto is "sorrowing, yet alway rejoicing".

3. The width of the Christian Ethic is also seen in its unconquerable aspiration, its effort to rise superior to all the disorder it bewails, and to approach continually nearer to its own ideal. In this respect, the *desiderium* of Christianity is one of its most distinctive features. Its confessions of failure are invariably blent with a passionate yearning after the unattained; and this yearning may be said to be prophetic of attainment yet in store. All fruitless regrets are disallowed by it; partly because they waste time, and enervate the spirit; partly because they distract the mind, and sometimes paralyse the will. It is thus that hope and aspiration, with the confidence of final attainment, always follow the sense of temporary defeat, in the alternating experiences of Christendom. The recognition of a nobler ideal, both of action and of experience, than any we have reached—our moral vision enlarging as our inward horizon changes—gives rise to a belief that our ideal will be progressively realised.

This is a distinctive note of the Christian temperament. It is dissatisfied—divinely dissatisfied—with all attainment. It "forgets what is behind" it, in thought, feeling, and action; and it "reaches out to what is before," always believing in its ultimate realisation. Its goal is not a stationary point, but one which ever moves on, knowing nothing of the "hitherto, and no further". All its insight recorded in the creeds, all its life expressed in work or deeds of service, are but steps in a ladder of never-ending progress. There is thus no finality, either in the creed of Christendom, or in the Christian Ethic. A relative finality was announced, and disclosed, at the commencement of the Christian era; but—as we have also seen—Christendom is still developing, both intellectually and morally. What may be revealed in the future, both as to the Divine nature and the human, in the slow evolution of the ages, no one can now anticipate; and what may yet be attained in experience—in the fulness of the times when "God is all in all"—is as far beyond the

horoscope of our present vision, as it is beyond our customary hope.

We may connect this with a point formerly discussed, *viz.*, that revelation of the Infinite within the finite, from which Christian morality takes its rise. It is not difficult to see how, starting from this and returning to it again—it being, in a real sense, the alpha and the omega of the system—there should be an invariable element of hope, underneath the sense of failure; a calm belief in the "increasing purpose" of the ages, and indefinite progress in store, both for the individual and the race at large.

It is important to contrast this with the finished perfection which was the aim of Greek art, Greek philosophy, and Greek life generally—the clear-cut completeness which was never wholly realised. There is in Christendom, on the contrary, *an acknowledged incompleteness*, which comes from a wider survey and a deeper study of the facts of human life; but which nevertheless outsoars all actual attainment, and is unaffected

alike by success and by disaster—never unduly elated by the one, or unduly depressed by the other. This feature is stamped ineffaceably on all the higher Christian art. In Robert Browning's *Old Pictures in Florence* we find it very significantly unfolded; as in many of his other poems, of which *Apparent Failure* and *Abt Vogler* may serve as examples. The former poem, *Old Pictures in Florence*, may be described as an exposition in verse of the following thesis, *viz.*, that the essence of Greek art lay in its effort to reach, and its success in reaching, a finished although a limited perfection; while the specialty, and even the secret, of Christian art has lain in its profound sense of imperfection, which has nevertheless striven to reach, and to a certain extent has succeeded in reaching, something beyond itself. In one sense the ideal of both was perfection; but the specialty of the Christian, in contrast with the Greek, ideal is this, that the former permits of no repose within the limits of the finite, and of no contentedness with an earthly boundary.

Through all its partial embodiments there runs an aspiration after excellence unattained; in other words, an everlasting ascent, through failure, toward perfection.

It is noteworthy that this has impressed a certain sadness on the Christian countenance—in all its most characteristic types—in contrast with the refined joyousness of the Greek, and the robust valour of the Roman face; but it is a sadness inseparable from the pursuit of the loftiest ideals. A significant fact, however, remains; the sadness referred to is neither austere, nor morose, nor petulant. nor desponding. It is that Divine sadness, which arises from the glimpse of far-off possibilities yet in store, of ideals that are believed in although they are unreached, and are passionately loved though unattained. This is seen, in many characteristic and even monumental aspects, both in the poetry, and in the art of Christendom. Its hymns, its litanies, its music, the very architecture of its churches, all show the blending of a sense of loss, with a belief in the Divine ideal, and aspiration after it.

CHAPTER XIV.

"THE HATE OF HATE, THE SCORN OF SCORN."

An important point to be now noted is the spirit or attitude towards others, which the Christian Ethic inculcates, in the course of this aspiration, on the part of the individual, to reach his ideal. It is that of unenvious delight in what others are achieving, an admiration of success as reached by them, while those who observe it do not, and perhaps cannot, themselves succeed in similar attainment. In this connection the words are applicable—

> Unless he can
> Above himself erect himself,
> How poor a thing is man.

The total elimination of envy, or "grudging the good of one's neighbour," is, like some of the rest, a rare virtue in Christendom. There are so many different types of envy. For example, when none is felt for what others

possess in the form of material substance, envy may be cherished for their reputation or their talent, for their influence or their fame, for their friendships or their enjoyments. It must however be put, in the very forefront of the Christian Ethic, that it demands a pure unenvious delight, in the contemplation of good achieved, of power realised, of influence won, of fame possessed, of talent exercised, or of enjoyment felt by others, while those who perceive these things themselves have none of them.

Further, there must, according to the Christian standard, be the total absence of indifference, and still more of scorn for anything that is done, or is esteemed by others, unless its pursuit is in any way base. A character, moulded after the Christian type, is wholly devoid of scorn, except towards things that are base, or evil, or unworthy. It is not cynical, and indulges in no sarcasm, and shows no contempt for the ideas of others, although these may be very different from its own. It is, as our poet puts it—

> Dowered with the hate of hate, the scorn of scorn.

It may perhaps be said of this habit of scorn—which is developed in many strong men—that it is one aim of the Christian Ethic to eradicate it. The tendency to satirise others, and to dwell upon their faults—whether in trivial gossip, or more elaborate denunciation—it supplants by a recognition of the good that may underlie the evil. The former may be described, in order to give it emphasis, as a Carlylean fault—because it was conspicuous in our great nineteenth-century critic of men, and of institutions; and it is a tendency not to be utterly condemned. We must by all means denounce the evil we find around us, as well as that which exists within ourselves; but we must endeavour even more earnestly to help those who are the victims of it, and who are often more anxious than we suppose to be freed from the evil, which it is so easy to detect, and to satirise. We must recognise the good that is hidden away—often in strange places—beneath the evil, and behind the pettinesses and the meannesses of life. These two may

very easily co-exist, and co-operate; on the one hand, a lofty ideal of personal action, with a scorn—at least for one's self—of all that falls below it; and, on the other, the utmost tenderness toward those who happen—perhaps from no fault of theirs—to be below it.

We may recall in this connection what was formerly said as to the attitude of Christianity toward evil, and its attitude toward those who are the accidental victims of evil; the one being antithetic, and the other sympathetic. The hatred, or even the detestation, of all shams, of unrealities and unveracities of every kind—which Carlyle emphasised so well—should never be transferred to the persons of those who are practical shams, or living unrealities—however painful their presence may be. The latter is rather a burden to be borne in silence. What is the use of getting into a rage—as our modern prophet used so frequently to do—at the multitudinous fools of the world? That is not the way to help any one of them to be a wise man. To put him into the pillory, and pelt him with angry

missiles, merely irritates and injures the fool. By this is not meant that Christianity is opposed to satire, or severe fault-finding; quite the contrary. At its very origin it was said that it came "not to send peace on earth but a sword"; but perhaps the case may be put most accurately thus, that—according to the Christian Ethic—no one has a right to be a censor of wrong, who does not at the same time endeavour to help others to escape from wrong, and to conquer the faults which he condemns. If the renovating power of the Christian Ethic is seen in its opening up the possibilities of nobler life to all men, it is evident that each should take some part in helping others toward this consummation; and while the fire of moral indignation is most excellent and useful when directed to its natural objects, if such indignation be the sole feeling which one cherishes toward his fellows—and the result be only scorching and burning—alas! for our human nature, and for those who have helped to scorch it. Misanthropy is, in every form, an evil; and, as practised in some in-

stances, it is tantamount to a disbelief in any divine element, or in the Divine Presence, within human nature.

Further, we may note the egotism that is involved in the way in which some good people set about the work of castigating others, so soon as they have detected any slight evil around them. If they have found that Society, or Literature, or the current of Politics require the leaven of some new influence, to make them higher and better, to give them ἐπιείκεια, or sweet reasonableness, they imagine that it is only by the adoption of a special panacea—their own specific—that the evil can be met, and the good be done. There is much unconscious egotism, in what passes current as Christian activity and philanthropy.

Not to dwell on this, some desiderata in the working out of the Christian ideal in the nineteenth century may now be indicated.

In cultured circles it requires some courage, not so much to admit that one belongs to the Christian brotherhood, as to carry out its ideal calmly and unobtrusively, in the midst

of alien or antagonistic influences; and one of the chief difficulties in our complex modern life is how to unite catholicity of spirit with religious earnestness. It has always been found extremely difficult to combine the recognition of good in others with energetic protest against evil of all kinds. The Christian brotherhood, however, is bound by the inner spirit of the religion it professes, to recognise the fragments of good which exist almost everywhere—wheat in the midst of tares, germs of excellence in alien systems, points to be admired even in what are otherwise repellent characters—if not in the evil and the base. It is its duty to seek out the latent good; and if possible to evoke it, in all quarters, and in every character. At the same time, it is bound to bring forward, and to exhibit, the noblest possible standard of action, while it recoils from baseness of every kind, and draws the line—sharp, distinct, and clear—between the two camps of light and darkness, the right and the wrong, the good and the evil. It is not easy to

combine these two things. It is much more difficult than any one can imagine, until he tries to put it in practice; and it is a more arduous task to do so, than to throw one's self with enthusiasm into any great cause, or enterprise, or venture. Nevertheless, it is much more necessary.

Some voices worthy of all deference have been telling us that the great need of our time is the diminution of class-barriers, the destruction of artificial hindrances to the influence of class on class, the widening out of sympathy throughout the entire social fabric, and throughout the world. That, doubtless, is much needed. We ought all if possible to be builders of bridges, spanning over the chasms that have been artificially made, and are artificially fostered, in the circles in which we move; but, as we do so,—and while we strive to widen our sympathy, not only by way of extension to the ends of the earth, but also intensively through every stratum of society—our own ideal of conduct, our standard of action, should simultaneously rise.

It should not be lowered by an iota, while we strive to see the good that is in every other character, to evoke that good, and to be instructed by its very difference from our own. The personal ideal should expand—enlarged by what it receives from without, as well as from within, and assimilates from every quarter—while the individual increasingly forgets himself, and merges the work and the worker together in

> That one far-off Divine event
> To which the whole creation moves.

CHAPTER XV.

THE RELATION OF CHRISTIANITY TO WEALTH AND POVERTY RESPECTIVELY.

A POINT in the Christian Ethic, somewhat difficult to determine, is its relation to wealth and to poverty respectively. We have, on the one hand, such sayings as these: "Blessed are the poor," "It is easier for a camel to go through the needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven"; and, on the other hand, "To him that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundantly". According to the first view, not only the love of money, but its possession, is regarded as a hindrance to the highest kind of life; according to the other, it is a trust to be laid out, with a view to its own increase, and that it may be utilised for the benefit of others.

One solution of the difficulty may be that these opposite advices, as to wealth, were

addressed to men of different temperaments and tendencies ; and the relation in which the Christian Ethic stands to the possession of money may depend almost entirely on the uses to which money is put. To some characters its possession is a blessing, to others it is a curse, and to others it is

Something between a hindrance and a help.

But it was no part of the aim of Christianity to abolish the distinction between rich and poor, either in the way of levelling up, or of levelling down. To try to make all poor persons rich, and all relatively rich persons poor, would be an utterly futile experiment. Even as a temporary arrangement, it would be an extremely dull one, "flat, stale, and unprofitable" to humanity, and it could not possibly last ; because differences would begin to reassert themselves, so soon as the levelling process was completed. There is no evidence, however, that the existence even of great extremes as regards wealth—on the one hand, the vast fortune of the millionaire,

and, on the other, the condition of the day-labourer, whose whole earnings are needed for the maintenance of himself and his family —is inconsistent with the aims of the Christian Ethic. We have already seen that it is a fundamental principle in that Ethic that "it is more blessed to give than to receive". At the same time, Christianity regulates the act of receiving, as well as the process of giving; and, besides being utopian and unworkable, the socialistic levelling up, and the communistic levelling down—if they may be so distinguished—would make both the giving and receiving impossible. If all men are made absolutely equal, there is no room for either the one or the other. As things at present stand, however, there are such varieties in the social strata of the world that, while "one gives, and the other receives," the giver is the "more blessed" of the two; and yet, on the other hand, the receiver may say that he "has nothing, and yet possesses all things"; that he "is poor, and yet makes many rich," by affording them

the opportunity, and therefore the blessedness of giving.

It was a far-reaching perception of a permanent feature, in the social life of the world, which led to the saying "The poor ye have always with you". Ever since it was spoken, the poor have been "always with us"; and the two classes have co-existed—with intermediaries manifold—for the nineteen centuries of the Christian era. As a matter of fact it may be said that, it has been supremely good for the rich—although they have not always seen it—that the poor should exist around them; and it has been equally good for the poor—although, for obvious reasons, it has been still less frequently realised by them—to have the rich always around them, and above them.

Reverting for a moment to the inevitable state of things in human life already referred to—*viz.*, that so long as men and women differ in physical power, mental force, tact, skill, and faculty of any kind, so long will there be differences in the social strata—and

therefore inequalities in wealth—it may be noted as a specialty in the Christian Ethic how it proposes to regulate, on the one hand the use of wealth, and on the other the uses of adversity or poverty.

It utilises each for the sake of the other. If the poor are to be helped by the rich, the rich are at the same time to be helped by the poor; and, in truth, they need it quite as much. The existence of a profound underlying social bond between the two—a bond which connects them organically—is recognised in the Christian Ethic. It is even intensified; while, at the same time, it is purified from the taint of selfishness. If the "brother of low degree is to rejoice in that he is made rich, and the rich in that he is made low," it is not that the one is to rejoice in the mere accession of wealth, and the other in its diminution; but it is that the coming and the going of these things—their temporary rise and fall, or ebb and flow—are the sign of a hidden bond which connects the two; in other words, they are evidence of the unity

and the solidarity of the race. Thus the ideal, which the Christian Ethic proposes, is not the abolition of the two extremes of wealth and poverty. It is rather the bridging over of the chasm, which has so frequently and painfully divided them ; the recognition on the one hand, that poverty may be an estate of honour—it was that in which the Founder of the Christian Religion lived—and, on the other, that riches may be more truly a source of wealth to its possessor, if he spends a great deal of it in helping the poor.

It is no doubt one of the desiderata in the Christian Ethic—clearly involved in its origin, but not as yet realised in any workable scheme—how to minimise the *vast* inequalities of wealth and poverty which exist in the world. It may safely be affirmed, however, that they will not be minimised, by a drastic process of change, or by any "radical reform" ; but rather by the slow evolution of moral forces, which now lie latent, but may by-and-bye emerge, and co-operate to effect it.

A similar point of much importance is

the way in which Christianity deals with the possession of wealth, in relation to its use. It is a total mistake to suppose that it is hostile either to the acquisition, or to the retention of wealth; although it may be said to be more interested in its diffusion than its accumulation. Under no possible circumstances could wealth be distributed, unless it was first amassed; and it has been already mentioned as a characteristic feature of the Christian Ethic that it regulates, at one and the same time, its acquisition, retention, and diffusion. Primarily it regards all possession, of whatsoever kind, as a trust, to be spent by its owner for the benefit of others. If we "are not our own," what we have is possessed by us, only in order that it may be used to advance the general welfare. It is obvious that the tenure of property by every individual is limited at the best; but the idea that the legal owner of wealth is merely its steward, and that he is bound by the highest charter of privilege to spend it on others,—

without thinking that by so doing he is the "munificent donor" he is sometimes supposed to be, or is represented as being,—that is the Christian idea. And as soon as the practice of giving to others becomes habitual, it will be recognised as the *normal* practice for all well-developed lives, and for every highly cultivated nature. Its opposite will be regarded as abnormal; and selfishness of every kind will be looked upon not only as ungenerous, but as unnatural, a sort of violation of the laws or the order of Nature.

The way in which the Christian Ethic deals with the *want* of wealth is, however, quite as significant as the way in which it regulates its *possession.* The earliest mission of Christianity may be said to have been to the poor, not only because, at the outset of its career, it consecrated the state of poverty for all time; not only because it abolished class-distinctions, in disclosing the common relation of all men to the Infinite; not only because it proved that noblest virtues are possible under conditions of extremest want, and suf-

fering; but also—and perhaps more especially—because it established a new relationship between the poor and the rich. On the one hand, it removed all envy on the part of the poor towards the rich, and took away the false sense of inferiority which the poor often feel because of their social distance from the rich ; on the other hand, it destroyed the false notion of superiority, which the rich so often feel because of their artificial distance from the poor. Before its introduction, the poor and the rich hardly ever met on equal terms. That they now do so, and have done so to such good purpose for eighteen centuries, is very largely due to the abolition of social chasms, and the bridging over of intellectual differences, accomplished by Christianity. That men and women meet familiarly, not because they are equals in fortune, any more than because they agree in opinion, but because they are on a level as regards character, intellect, refinement, and width of sympathy, is one of its beneficent results.

One of the noblest of the primitive Apostles

wrote: "I know both how to be abased, and how to abound"; and it is to the influence of his example, and more especially to that of his Master, that the attitude of the poor towards the rich in Christendom is not one of cringing inferiority; while, at the same time, the poor have been taught to recognise and honour those differences, which the possession of wealth creates. Whatever it may be in practice, it is clear that the *teaching*—which is now a commonplace of our modern era—that the possession of wealth is a secondary matter, that our humanity itself is greater than anything which that humanity can possess—that "kind hearts are more than coronets," that "the rank is but the guinea stamp," is, in a very significant sense, a result of the leaven of the Christian Ethic.

I do not think it was any part of its aim to abolish the distinction of rich and poor, and to equalise men socially in the matter of possession. Certainly, it has not succeeded in doing so; but Christianity has minimised the distinction, by disclosing a deeper unity

beneath it, a unity undreamed of in the older civilisations. It has proved to the rich, that the poor are as necessary to them, to give them a sphere for work and well-doing; as the rich are needed by the poor, to aid them in difficulty or distress.

CHAPTER XVI.

ADDENDA.

THERE are sundry other aspects of the Christian Ethic, which have not been dealt with in the preceding sections, the discussion of which is necessary to an adequate treatment of the subject.

1. One of them is its attitude toward offenders; or, to use its own words, "those who despitefully use you, and persecute you". The subject was indirectly dealt with, in the chapter on the virtue of Forgiveness, but it demands an ampler discussion by itself.

In the form of non-resistance to injury, as developed in certain sects—through a mistaken view, if not a travesty, of the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount—it has resulted in an attitude of weak prostration before opponents, utterly inconsistent with heroism, or even with true manliness. In

its original and genuine phase, however—as illustrated in the life of its Founder—it is one of the noblest of human virtues. The Christian Ethic is not opposed to all resistance to injury. It even ordains the most resolute and determined struggle to redress the wrongs that exist around it, and the sacrifice of time, wealth, health, and even of life itself, in the effort; but the crusader spirit is on the whole inconsistent with its moral aim. The crusader spirit may be described as one which seeks to conquer and reclaim, by the forthputting of external, and even of extirpating agencies. The Christian spirit desires to effect the same end, by the development of the interior forces of moral effort and persuasion.

2. In this connection, another feature of the Christian Ethic may be noted, *viz.*, its almost immeasurable patience, in reference to the development of the human race, and the absence of irritation or disappointment at any delay in the realisation of its own ideals. As a recent poet expressed it:—

we are hasty builders, incomplete;
Our Master follows after, far more slow,
And far more sure than we, for frost and heat
And winds that breathe, and waters in their flow,
Work with him silently.

3. An important, but somewhat difficult, point in the Christian Ethic is its relation to such things as gambling, betting, etc. Its attitude to almost every form of sport is one of genial sympathy; although it is usually found that, when the Christian Ethic takes possession of a character, there is less time left, than before existed, for the development of the "play-impulse"; and, contrariwise, as the sportive instinct grows, the more distinctive features of the Christian Ethic are less cared for. It must, however, be explicitly stated that Christianity is not hostile to any kind or form of sport, except to what is intrinsically cruel. That it is opposed to the latter is unquestionable; but the reason why such things as bull-fights, bear-baiting, cock-fighting, and pugilism generally, are inconsistent with the Christian Ethic is because suffering, cruelty, and

swagger—with all their attendant evils—are invariably attendant elements in these sports. On the other hand, that hunting and horse-racing, that deer-stalking, salmon-fishing, or grouse-shooting are inconsistent with the Christian Ethic has no warrant—either in reason, or in experience. That one should devote his leisure to such things as golf, or tennis, or cricket, or billiards, is no more to be condemned than that another should spend his leisure in riding or driving, in long country walks, in hill-climbing, or in gardening.

When we come to gambling and betting, however, we are in a different moral region altogether; and without affirming categorically that these things are disallowed by the Christian Ethic, it may be said that they are discouraged by it. They are discouraged no less by the highest ethical ideal of Greece; and it is mainly on the ground of their triviality, or irrationality, that—under either standard—they are to be set aside. It is said that it adds an interest to a game of whist, or of golf, if there is a considerable stake dependent

on it ; and also that it makes a player play his very best. The latter may sometimes be the case ; but, if so, its root or ground is selfish ; and it would certainly be a higher stage, in the moral development of the race, if *all* games were played from the interest involved in them, rather than from any collateral gain dependent upon them. When betting degenerates to a lower level—and extends to the chance of *others* winning games, in which the better takes no part, or to the likelihoods of a horse-race, or the duration of a Parliament—it is nearly as puerile as when an idler at a club bets on the relative speed with which two rain-drops on an outside window will fall to the foot of a pane of glass.

4. This leads to a still larger subject, which can only be mentioned, at the close of our discussion of these *addenda.* It is the function of the Church, as a vast spiritual agency, working towards the re-formation of character, and the re-construction of society. Only a narrow philosophy can be blind to this, only a meagre science can ignore it. It is difficult

indeed to sum up what, in this respect, the Church has done for the world ;—and every branch must be included within the Church catholic and cosmopolitan ; for in the case of the sects, with their inevitable differences, "the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee, nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you". I refer to the debt which the modern world owes to Christendom for the elevation of human life, for the refinement of character, for the lessening of selfishness, for the development of courtesy, for the ennobling of the relations of the sexes, for the increase of honour, and the amount of mutual respect and goodwill in the world. What the leaven of this ethic has done to supplant the selfish jostling of individuals and communities, to subdue base passions in the multitude, to lessen class-interests, to uproot the ambitions that are sordid, and to restrain those that are in excess—all this is matter of simple history. And the goal is not yet reached. It is impossible now to foresee what may be in store for humanity through the operation of

those benign forces which still lie latent in Christendom.

For example, we may look for the solution of many of the disputes between capital and labour, or at least to the lessening of friction between them, to the influence of this ethic, when it has more thoroughly leavened society. It is not opposed, as some imagine, to all strife between men and their masters, or the operatives and the employers of labour. It even recognises a value in these contests, if they are carried on with due regard to justice, to the common good, and to the liberty of all. They have often been pernicious to society, and injurious to both the combatants: but at the same time they have developed new energy and resources, and even created a demand for fair-dealing and generosity. One function of the Christian ethic is to regulate these conflicts, not to suppress or extinguish them, and to develop the highest good of each class by means of the strife which occurs periodically between them: adding to the efficiency and to the profits of labour by the

diminution of excessive toil, by hours of recreation—in which health-giving sports may take the place of mere ease, or animal indulgence—and thus adding to the capital both of employer and employed. If the principle of the Christian Ethic—that the conservation and development of one's own life is not possible without an equal regard for other lives around it—were acted out continuously, these conflicts between capital and labour would become a social blessing, instead of a constant menace to society: and how to evoke an interest in the welfare of others, who may seem rivals rather than friends, how to stimulate and increase it, is one of the chief problems which the modern Church has to face. One thing is clear, that it cannot be done by legislation, or by statute, nearly so well as by the voluntary action of individuals and of society. It is by personal effort, and individual labour spontaneously put forth, that Christianity has achieved its most beneficent ends.

Few things could be more helpful, in the

work now indicated—as well as in the effort to realise the whole of that ideal, which has been outlined in preceding chapters—than a belief in the correlation of the moral forces. A brief discussion of this subject will be found in Appendix ii. (p. 159). The fact that all the moral forces of character are interchangeable or convertible, that in the energy of one there is prospective promise of the energy of all, and that each is as necessary as any other to the efficiency of the whole, may become one of the strongest inducements to their practice, under circumstances that seem hostile to their growth. The far-reaching principle of evolution may here be accepted as the best buttress of the Christian Ethic. What Christendom now is has been evolved out of what it once was, by a multitude of co-operating causes. If, on the one hand, we have evidence of the strongest kind, showing us the working of a principle higher than Nature in the conscious life of the race—and introducing elements into that life from a Source which transcends itself—on the other

hand, in its incessant transformations, we have evidence of untold possibilities in store. According to the Christian Ethic it would seem that one may "have nothing, and yet possess all things". Certain it is that the very loftiest ideal that can be framed by the human intellect comes quite naturally within the hope of realisation by the poorest of the race.

APPENDICES.

APPENDICES.

No. I.

THE INDIVIDUAL AND THE SOCIAL IDEA.

[THE following is an extract from a letter, written to me nearly thirty years ago, by Dora Greenwell of Durham. She was a poet, and also remarkable as an essayist on the problems of the Higher Life. *The Patience of Hope*, *Two Friends*, *Lacordaire*, *Colloquia Crucis*, and many other of her books, possess singular interest; and her letters were even more suggestive than her books. This one deals with a problem in Christian Ethics, and speaks for itself.]

'*9th April*, 1866.

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'I think a noticeable feature in Christianity is that it gives room for two tendencies, ever conflicting in human thought, both of which are clearly essential to the true social idea. The collective principle—Church or Catholic—which has been urged so strongly by modern poets and thinkers, witness Lamartine, Lamennais, and Mazzini, that they have gone far to place, as a French writer says, "all morality, all social prosperity, even genius itself, in the annihilation of the individual and the progress of the race". In other words, they made individualism the centre of the evil principle—source

of all ill. When it is evident that individualism (witness J. S. Mill's powerful reclamation) is the true salt of the earth, alone able to lead, to revive, to awaken. A man often serves society best, by making the best of himself. Thoreau says, speaking of professed philanthropists, "*I want the flower and fruit of a man*, I desire that some fragrance be wafted over from him to me, and that some ripeness should flavour our intercourse". He asks for an unconscious bounty, the outflowing of what a man is, costing nothing, and beyond all cost; and he says elsewhere "doing good is one of the professions that are full".—"Probably *I* should not deliberately and consciously forsake my particular calling to do the good which society demands of me to save the universe from annihilation!"

'Many persons, it is evident, and Thoreau amongst them, will never be of any value whatever, except by just being what they were made to be, and doing the work that they were born to do. They cannot be ground in the social mill, or grind in it, except like Samson, with fettered and defiant strength. "The care of Christianity," says Bishop Warburton, "is for particulars." Now in many a philosophy, in Platonic for example, there is a tendency to sacrifice the parts for the good of the whole.

> Let the individual wither,
> And the race be more and more.

'But, when all is said in favour of the collective social principle, every one feels, in the very depth and ground of his nature, that *he* is something in the scale of existence, to at least two beings, himself and God. No one

really agrees with Carlyle's paradoxical dictum: "And what after all is *thy* happiness, who toldest thee thou hadst a right to be happy?" A sacred, an inalienable right, is man's, if not to happiness—as that, in the present order, must be in some degree accidental, and dependent on circumstance—at least to love, care, and protection from God. Where is this claim so abundantly justified as in the records of the early Church? The Old Testament is, on this account, even more profoundly comforting than the New, in times of danger or of sharp affliction. The Divine care is so remarkably disclosed, the Divine goodness and severity shown, in the guidance, chastening, and deliverance of *individuals*, not only in his care of kings and prophets, and evidently *selected* persons, from Abraham to Daniel, but in his pity for poor, forsaken, disconsolate men and women, grieved in soul and harassed by unkindness. "So this poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles."

'"Behold the eye of the Lord is on them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy. To deliver their souls from death, and to keep them alive in time of dearth." It is this sense of what Herder calls "the insight, foresight, and oversight of God," that has made the Book of Psalms the greatest poetry-book of the human race. They are founded upon a sense of friendship, and an established personal relation, with God—a familiar and friendly confidence, upon which Herder considers man's first religious ideas to have been founded, and to which God Himself invited man.

'"Compared with the Psalms," he says, "as regards the soul's wants, the fairest poetry of the Greeks is but

glittering and external, and the Celtic, much as I love it, is but like a glorious cloudy evening sky, displaying much that is magnificent in earth and heaven; but without sun, without God, without aim—showing us no path.

'"The God of the Hebrews, who takes interest in all his works, and looks after them in a human manner, is not the God of the modern Deist. The Hebrew conception is that of a God who thinks and feels with man, one towards whom friendly and child-like love is a possible and a natural feeling. The primitive idea of God, as developed in the Psalms and Book of Job, is that of a *House-Father*, a Being always at work, who keeps everything going by daily continual interlocution. He is the Father of the dew, giving snow like wool, and scattering the hoar-frost like ashes. He is one who takes all creation under his individual superintendence. This gives to Hebrew and Eastern poetry in general a child-like simplicity, a reference to God, a confidence in Him, ever strengthening, ever renewing itself. His mercies are over all his works. Nothing is too small for God's care, nothing too feeble. He is represented as nourishing the life of plants and trees, quickening them with dews—'the cedars of Libanus which He hath planted'. He hears the young, ungainly ravens who call upon Him. He helps the wild-goat in the time of her solitary, painful travail. To Him there is nothing that is savage, dumb, despised. The lions, roaring after their prey, seek their meat from Him. Of the wild ass it is said: 'God has made his home in the wilderness, and the barren land his dwelling'. The hawk flies through his wisdom, through Him the eagle makes his nest on high. Even

the great deep, the abode of monsters, is his; He loves the hateful crocodile. Behemoth is the chief of his ways, *i.e.*, his excellent masterpiece" (Herder's *Spirit of Hebrew Poetry*).

'Then, as regards the opposite pole of human thought—the aggregate and social—what magnificent breadth and space Christianity unfolds for its development, above all in the Apostolic Epistles, where the each and the all seem mutually inclusive; and Christ is each to each, and, in Him, each is all.

'While Christianity takes some part of life, as in a sacrament, and through it consecrates the whole of life, some one Person, as our Saviour—and through Him redeems humanity, there are also some selected persons, who are "the salt of the earth," regenerating, stimulating the otherwise spiritually inert mass. While it saves the whole through the part, the world through the Church, it also admits another mode of rehabilitation, which no one urges so boldly as Mazzini—*that of the individual through the species*. Speaking of Art, he says: It demands universality, it must no longer be concealed in the narrow sphere of individuality. The progress of ideas has by little and little altered the point of view of Philosophy, Science, and Policy. Its end will no longer be the individual, but society; the man will yield precedence to humanity. Individuality will still be sacred, for it is an essential element of humanity, but it must henceforth harmonise with the social conception. Instead of contemplating the individual only in his individual internal life—his own sphere, independent, insulated—the artist will have to study him in his internal and external life; at

once, in his place, and with his mission in Creation. In a word, man in relation with God through humanity will be his theme. The action of the law of our existence cannot be concentrated in ourselves, its development must tend *without.* The desire for moral unity, Mazzini says, is characteristic of the present age.

'Speaking of Lord Byron's heroes, he says finely: There is about them a terrible unity. Self in each of them is mighty and fierce, each to himself is worth the whole world, and if society constrained him he could set his strength to break it piecemeal. Each is the solitary man-king, free, but *with nothing free beyond him.* Are they happy in the uncontrolled plenitude of their faculties, breathing existence at every pore, active, daring, a flaming energy willing to snatch the whole of life? No! What shall they do with their freedom? On whom, and for whom, shall they spend their exuberant life? They are alone. Here is the secret of their sadness, their impotency. They have never thought of that humanity which is thronging around them, which has thronged before them, and which will throng after them. They have never thought on the place they occupy between the past and future, on the continuity of labour which unites generations, on the grand object of common perfection to be realised by common efforts, on the life yet lived upon earth by him, who, living and dying in hope, works with and watches over his brothers by transmitted thought. Alone they stand before God. Alone in the face of the universe, cowed by its grandeur, before which the individual shrinks; gifted with a liberty they know not how to use, with an active strength they know not how to

apply, with a fulness of life whose object they know not, they lead an angry, vain existence. They die, as they have lived, alone; nor will Nature, whom they have so much loved, mourn over their tomb—

> Nor earth, nor sky shall yield a single tear,
> No cloud shall gather more, nor leaf shall fall,
> Nor gale breathe forth one sigh, for thee, for all.

God, he says, has condemned to barrenness all Philosophy that confines itself within the circle of individuality. "Love," Michelet says, "is the grand emancipating principle." An inferior degree of love seeks to captivate and subjugate another individuality to its own; a higher love aims at enlarging, developing, and raising that which it loves.'

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No. II.

THE CORRELATION OF THE MORAL FORCES.

[*The following is an Address which I gave to "the Ethical Society," London, in* 1890. *It was afterwards published in the* NATIONAL REVIEW.]

IN discussing the question of the correlation of the moral forces, I start from what may be assumed as a demonstrated doctrine, viz., the convertibility of the physical ones. The interchangeability of these forces is one of the conclusions of modern science, equal in importance to the doctrine of Evolution—to which it is closely kindred—and equal in evidence to the law of Gravitation.

The first question I put is this: Is it legitimate to infer, from the above scientific axiom, the convertibility

of all force? and, from the unity of the material and the mental forces, their ultimate identity?

In answer, I think it is not: for the obvious reason that the chasm between the physical and the vital has not yet been bridged by Science; and although Speculative Philosophy has tried from the time of the Eleatics to throw a plank across it, in its doctrine of unity-minus-difference, neither Parmenides nor Plotinus, neither Erigena nor Spinoza nor Hegel (to take representative names from successive schools and periods), has proved to the satisfaction of the philosophical world that monism of this type is the last word in Metaphysics. I therefore set aside the question as to whether the physical, the vital, and the conscious forces can be unified. Embraced within a single category of thought, and labelled by the common name of "Force," they can, of course, be easily talked of as one; but there certainly remains a fundamental trinity within that unity, and it is enough for my present purpose to say that the question—both as a scientific and as an ontological one—is still *sub judice.*

Let us, then, provisionally assume—without going into either the metaphysics or the physics of the controversy—that there are three realms of force, which have not yet been reduced to unity by the rigour of speculative reason, or by the experiential and inductive proofs of science: (1) the sphere of the physical forces, which are all inter-related, and convertible *inter se;* (2) the realm of the vital force or forces; and (3) the sphere of self-conscious and volitional force, in which intellectual elements blend with moral ones. Let us suppose that there is no discovered track, which is also a transit-path, be-

tween these several realms or spheres; but only the bridge of a common name. What may be suggested as highly probable is this: that as, in the first of the three spheres, the doctrine of interchangeability is now almost as clearly demonstrated as is the law of natural selection, it may be concluded, by analogy, that it is the same in the two other realms; and, therefore, that all life is radically and organically one, and that all self-conscious energy—mental, moral, and volitional—is, at its root, the same.

Adequately to discuss the first of these correlaries, one would require to be familiar with data, on which only experts have a right to speak. The question of the germ-theory of life, and of disease, must be left to specialists in biology and physics. The problem now raised is much narrower. It refers to the sphere of consciousness alone, or, perhaps, it should rather be said, to the field of Human Nature alone. Within that sphere, there are both conscious and sub-conscious states; and, in the field of consciousness, there may be a further limitation of the problem, viz., to the moral area of experience. Within this sub-section, we may examine the springs of conduct *seriatim*, and their outcome in character: that we may see whether they are originally one—howsoever different their developed phases may be, and whether we may conclude that they are all convertible *inter se.*

In discussing it, it is scarcely necessary to say that the old notion of "faculties" as separate powers of human nature, is given up by every modern psychologist. It was a convenient way of naming and differentiating cer-

tain aspects of energy in consciousness, to speak of them as faculties; but the idea of our being endowed with separate and independent powers—of sense, memory, imagination, reason, feeling, and will—is no longer tenable.

It is more congenial work, however, to try to raise the down-trodden reputation of a discarded theory—and to show the truth from which it sprang—than, in a combative mood, to expose the error to which it gave rise; and this old doctrine of the faculties was only a pictorial, and somewhat picturesque, way of stating an undoubted truth in reference to those phases of activity, which differ so greatly in their outcome, although their origin may be the same. Whether the intellectual and the moral powers are one at their root, and have grown out of something wholly unlike their present state, is a question we need not raise. It might rather enhance the wonder of their origin, than detract from their present greatness, if we had valid evidence that there was but one "rock whence they were hewn," and one "pit out of which they were dug"; since, in their present multitudinousness and variety, they are the phases of a single *ego*, which is the residuum at the basis of all energy in man. This, however, would not prove their interchangeability. The determination of the latter question is one both for Psychology and for Metaphysic: and perhaps its solution will be easier, after we have settled the minor question of the interchangeability of the moral forces, and the unity of the realm to which these forces belong.

It is not necessary, with a view to its solution, that we have a list of the several virtues, drawn out on perfectly

adequate psychological lines. We may take any list—the Platonic, the Aristotelian, the Stoic, the Zoroastrian, the Buddhist, the Christian — or a perfectly miscellaneous one, such as the following—courage, temperance, candour, liberality, friendship, magnanimity, honour, justice, courtesy, tenderness, chivalry, humility, grace. It would be quite possible to go on, dividing and subdividing, or mingling and interchanging the virtues, till we had—instead of those mentioned—ten times their number; and yet each would seem different from the rest, owing to the circumstances in which it has to be exercised, or the objects which respectively call it forth. Thus diverse in character and outcome, they may, nevertheless, be all one in origin, the varying phases of a single virtue, in its separate modes of manifestation; just as the chemical and physical forces—heat, light, electricity, etc.—are the separate modes of a single protean power.

In helping us to answer the question raised, the evolution of the moral sense, within historical experience, is an all-important element. It has been affirmed that all the virtues which have arisen are the result of the efforts of man to increase and multiply his own resources, and the resources and possibilities of his race; self-maintenance, and race-maintenance—in the widest and richest sense of the terms—having been the motive forces at work in the evolution of his powers, and therefore in the gradual differentiation of his faculties. If this be a warrantable position to take up, it will abolish the controversy between the egoists and the altruists, by vindicating each; and by showing that both tendencies—the centripetal and the

centrifugal—were at work from the first, under many disguises and *aliases*.

It may be noted that the want of any explicit link of connection between the developed products, or the wide chasm which may seem to separate them now, is no evidence against a common parentage. Suppose that one particular virtue has been in active exercise for a time, or that the generic virtue of self-maintenance and race-maintenance has been working in one particular channel for a time, it is inevitable that it must at length cease to exercise itself, and intermit its energy for a period. Every virtue exhausts itself, by its very activity and strength. In fact, it is never quite the same, during any two successive moments of experience; and when it reasserts itself, after temporary rest, it does so with the alliance of other elements, which it has received both by inheritance and by contagion. It therefore appears, of necessity, in a different guise from that which it formerly assumed. Not only is the same virtue—supposing the virtues to be separate and independent—changed in character at each new period in which it is exercised, so that courage, temperance, and courtesy differ in a boy, in a young man, in one in middle life, and in an old man; but when the virtues reappear in the field of consciousness, they come back blent with many elements that were not there before. They are inevitably altered "for better for worse, for richer for poorer". The distant inheritances of character—which reach us from paternal and maternal sources—show themselves, now in this peculiarity of action or demeanour, and again in that; but it is always the same moral *ego* that is

developing, and differentiating itself, in these successive experiences.

As a new element in the case we must not overlook the sudden, and curiously strong, reactions that occur in moral experience. How are we to explain these? The rapid development of a virtue, which seems the opposite of all that had gone before it, in the character which exemplifies the change; *e.g.*, a selfish nature becoming generous, or a cynic hopeful, or a sot comparatively temperate. It is not that the old tendency has wrought itself out, and satiety followed, determining reaction the other way; it is rather that a reaction in experience, and a return to a truer and a healthier view of conduct, prove that the underlying force in character is one and the same.

In this connection it should be noted that ethical lessons are very seldom taught directly. A certain result is produced, by passing through an ordeal which has been keen or arrowy—say a great disaster, or an experience of wrong. Its effect may at first be unperceived, because it is occult and subterranean, working inward; but the original moral force may reappear afterwards as a new virtue of a totally different kind—as distinct as light is from heat, or as both are from electricity.

It is too obvious to require illustration that, given a moral agent, with a certain character, and subject to certain conditions, a particular class of virtues will be evolved; and that, given the same agent, with the same character, and different conditions, a different set of virtues will be evolved. If this be admitted as a matter of fact, the corollary is that the motive force, which in the main regulates conduct, and differentiates the virtues, comes

from within; and that, this dynamic source or seat of the virtues being one, the virtues themselves may be traced back on the last analysis to a common root.

Another point to be noticed is that destructive agencies are at work in the moral world, which are correlated with the productive or constructive ones, to further the general weal. This suggests, remotely if not nearly, the unity of the virtues. Every one knows how elaborate are the contrivances in the realm of Nature to inflict pain, injury, ruin, and death, among the organisms underneath man. But this arrangement, by which

> Nature, red in tooth and claw,

destroys its weaker physical specimens, is paralleled in the equally elaborate plan by which the weaker members of the human race are crushed aside, after much suffering, defeat, neglect, and loss. It is part of a destructive process, at work in the cosmos, and which has probably always existed in it. Alongside of this, however, there is a constructive process at work—a strictly conservative force, sometimes evolved out of the other by reaction. This new force enters the arena, "not to destroy, but to fulfil"; but, whilst it does so, its mode of working seems an evidence of the unity of all the moral forces, of their interchangeability, and almost of their ubiquity.

The doctrine of the unity of the virtues is an old one in the literature of Philosophy. Its germs are to be found in the Vedas, and in Buddhism. It became explicit in the Zend-Avesta. Zoroaster unified the good and the evil principles, in two great areas or diametrically-opposed spheres of action. Socrates—to pass over earlier Greek

writers—held that all virtue was one, and had its root in knowledge; while the Cynics, and the Stoics, more emphatically, announced the same theory. In Stoicism the doctrine exploded in a series of paradoxes, such as that if a man possessed a single virtue he possessed all the virtues. Virtue to the Stoics was an indivisible, homogeneous, inelastic, organic whole. Either you had it all, or you had it not at all. There was no state half-way between a virtue and a vice, and no middle place between no virtue and all the virtues. Rudimentary, developing, and evolving virtue was not understood by the Stoics; and, in consequence, there were no "degrees of comparison" in their view of moral excellence. Hence the arbitrary division of mankind into two classes, as sharply marked as in the ethics of Zoroaster; and hence the further paradox that the good do nothing evil, and the bad do nothing good; that all good actions are equally good, all evil ones equally evil—no distinction between faults and crimes being recognised. In short, there was no *scale* in Stoicism, either of virtue or of vice. But, with this forgotten scale recognised, the truth out of which the Stoic paradoxes sprang must not be forgotten; and, if adequately understood, this ancient doctrine of the unity of the virtues, and their convertibility, may be one of the most powerful incentives to their pursuit in the modern world. If one may legitimately believe that the moral excellence, after which he strives in vain, is nevertheless an integral element in the nature he inherits, and therefore a latent possibility of his life,—*only requiring the removal of existing hindrance, and the presence of some magnet, to draw them forth,*—there is a large amount of

good cheer in the prospect. The possibility of dormant virtues springing into activity, or of dull ones being quickened by transference, adds a new interest to the moral life, and its aspiration after unrealised ideals.

The evidence which experience gives of the indestructibility of the moral forces tends towards the same result. No morally good act ever dies. It perpetuates itself, in other forms, as well as after its own likeness. As Browning represents Abt Vogler saying :—

> There shall never be one lost good! What was, shall live as before ;
> The evil is null, is nought, is silence implying sound ;
> What was good shall be good, with for evil so much good more.

The correlation of the forces may thus be seen, in personal experience; but the same conclusion may be reached from a study of the way in which they operate in society at large. If moral life in the individual be fundamentally and organically one, it is so *à fortiori* in society; where many units combine to forward the general weal, by co-operation and inter-communication. All the social forces are *solidaires*. The energy which enthusiasts possess, in collectively working out a great cause, is just the sum of the energy of the individuals who compose the group; but whilst they combine to effect a common end, they all differ *inter se*. The moral force at work in the organisation is composite; but it works to a single end. The energy which each unit brings, into what may be called the commonwealth of the forces, while it is different from that which every other brings, is at the same time convertible into it; and the special form it assumes

is often a matter of apparent chance or accident. That which, in a particular profession, becomes a force tending to the strength of that profession would—if its author had entered on a different calling—have differentiated itself accordingly, and gone to increase the sum-total of energy, in labour of another kind.

If it seems difficult to carry out this principle in reference to the race at large, it may be noted that between the individual and the race there lies the nation; and that the solidarity and convertibility of national forces may be obvious when those of the race are less patent to the eye.

No. III.

AUTHORITY AND CONFESSION.

As I have said some things in the preface to this book, and elsewhere, which might be construed as hostile to Catholicism, I desire to point out, in a third appendix, one or two of the elements which have helped to consolidate and strengthen our modern life, and which have been due to the development, not so much of dogma as of moral practice, within the Church Catholic.

The first of these is the spirit of *deference to Authority*, respect for the wisdom and attainments of the past, while at the same time "forgetting what is behind, and reaching out to what is before". No Protestant who understands the mighty incubus which mediævalism came at length to exercise over the thoughts and ideals of humanity—its repression of individual liberty, and the rights of reason—can doubt that the Reformation of the sixteenth century was *a historical necessity*. On the other hand, the

enormous power for good which the Catholic Church exerted during these middle ages—the kindliness of its voice, the helpfulness of its hand, and the way in which it *guarded* those characters which it leavened and controlled—are authentic facts of history. If it repressed human nature in certain directions, it was, for the most part, in directions in which repression was most salutary.

No one who appreciates goodness, devotion, and self-control, and who reads history with candour and discrimination, can doubt what I have ventured to call "the enormous power for good" which the Church exercised during those centuries. It is indeed difficult to imagine to what depths European society would have sunk in the middle ages but for the influence of Catholicism, both in restraining and in purifying human life. In this respect Christendom has assuredly been "the salt of the earth" as well as "the light of the world".

It need hardly be said that the virtue of deference to Authority can easily be carried too far. It can, and it often has, become slavish, mechanical, unreal, and therefore immoral; and such a travesty and caricature of it was, to a certain extent, and in certain hands, the curse of the middle ages. But, in its extravagance, it was merely an instance—on a vast historic scale—of the abuse of a good thing. Deference to Authority is, in itself, salutary; it is only evil when carried to excess, when accepted slavishly and practised blindly. But what would mediæval society have been without it? As a remedy must be suited to the constitution of a patient, a moral agency that is to be remedial, or even conservative of good, must be adapted to those amongst whom it is to operate;

and while the adoption of the principle of free inquiry gave the European mind a start forward at the Reformation, it did not supersede the counter-principle of deference to Authority, but rather made it more needful in the long run, to save the world from eccentricity, vagary, and whim.

Surely this attitude of mind, this practice and custom of deference, has done much for the world, and is in itself most rational and wise. If a child should defer to its parents, and the inexperience of youth should yield to the wisdom of age—if in Scholarship, Science, Art, Medicine, we all defer to Authority, and place confidence in experts, why not in Religion? The insurgent spirit, which breaks away from the fetters of tradition, only to find itself out in the individualistic sea, storm-tossed, and without rudder or compass, or (a worse predicament) in the ocean of self-conceit and opinionativeness, is rebuked by the stern facts of history, by the evolution and the continuity of Christendom, by the vast legacy it has handed down—(an ever-increasing inheritance)—as well as by the restraint it puts on the idiosyncrasy and the caprice of the individual.

It is the easiest thing in the world for each new comer into it to think himself or herself wiser than those who have gone before; but, *à priori*, it is an extremely improbable hypothesis that it should fall to the lot of a single individual to initiate a wisdom higher than that possessed by the millions who have preceded him; and, *à posteriori*, it is invariably found that the originators of new wisdom, the founders of systems which contain a certain amount of truth, are unjust to those that have preceded their own. We have already seen that there

is no such thing as finality—a "hitherto and no farther" —either in opinion or action; but if the exercise of intellectual freedom in the breaking of unnatural fetters has created any virtues, deference to Authority has been the parent of many more. It has led to modesty, docility, generous appreciation, humility—to "wise passiveness" and devout receptivity—to the upward look of trust—to aspiration and the onward efforts of the will.

The moral debt which the world owes to the Roman Church is immeasurable; but perhaps none of its ceremonies have done more for the preservation and elevation of European morals than the practice—so much misunderstood, if not misrepresented—of Confession. Many Protestants imagine that the Catholic is taught to confess only to the priest, and that he is by the priest absolved. On the contrary, he makes confession only to the Unseen and the Infinite, the priest being merely the channel through whom the confession is made; and who has himself to confess, in the same way, through others, to the Unseen. And the custom, which—with all its humiliation—Catholics come to feel so helpful, that, *viz.*, of periodically practising confession, has unquestionably been an aid to the Higher Life during the centuries in which it has been practised. The turning of the eye inwards, scrutinising the springs and the motives of conduct, and after the discovery that one has erred this way or that, has "left undone those things which he ought to have done, and done those things which he ought not to have done," *confessing* it all, not to any human medium, but to the Infinite, through the guarded and gracious channel of the

finite; and after Confession—keeping nothing back, and being genuinely penitent for all—receiving absolution, in the sense of finding the burden lifted from the back, and a new step forward made possible, with a sense of freedom gained, and life renewed, not by forgetfulness of the past, but by rising "on the stepping-stones of the dead self to higher things"—all that has been an immeasurable blessing to the world.

The gain of Confession to all penitents is fourfold—(1) That of self-knowledge; γνῶθι σεαυτόν, might be said to be the first word it addresses to those who practise it. (2) The demand for thorough sincerity, or absolute truthfulness, in unfolding to the eye of the Infinite what has transpired, or been acted, in the depths of the personal life. [In this connection it may be noted that while recourse must be had to some medium, a common practice with penitents in the Roman Church is to resort, not to priests who know them, but to those by whom they are unknown, in order that the confession may be made absolutely to the Unseen.] (3) Reparation for wrongs done to others is made easier and more natural. None who make a practice of genuine confession can continue to harbour grudges, or to cherish hatreds, against their fellow-men. (4) A fresh start is given to the moral life, when—after everything is told, and burdens are removed—a new beginning is made, an impulse forward received, aspiration quickened, upward movements made easier, and the ideals of life developed in every direction under happier auspices than before.

To have familiarised the masses with the duty of absolute sincerity in this matter of Confession—to have

educated the organic conscience of the Church to feel that reserve on the one hand, and exaggeration on the other, is a sacrilegious act—to have taught them that in the presence of the Unseen, the Divine, and the Infinite, all disguises and pretence, as well as trifles, must be laid aside; and, after unreserved explicitness, a "new departure" in the higher life may be taken, is surely a service of the highest value to humanity at large. And if the aim of Confession has been to give self-knowledge, release, and rest—to give hope, and a new impulse in well-doing, as well as a glimpse of larger ideals of conduct—the result of the practice, tested by historical fact, has surely coincided with these aims. The practice has tended to raise the moral life of Europe. It is needless for a Protestant to quote statistics. The point to be noted is the influence of Confession as a moral safeguard; and I think that all open-minded historians will admit that it has tended in an upward direction.

No. IV.

[THE following List of Books, which deal directly or indirectly with the Christian Ethic, may be of use to students of the subject. They are arranged chronologically.]

De Imitatione Christi, by Thomas à Kempis, *cir.* 1468. Translated frequently.

Les Provinciales, ou Lettres écrites par Louis de Montalte à un provincial de ses amis et aux RR. PP.

Jésuites sur le sujet de la morale et de la politique de ces pères (1657). Translated by Rev. J. M'Crie, 1846, 1848, 1875.

Ductor Dubitantium, by Bishop Jeremy Taylor, 1660.

Pensées, by B. Pascal, 1669. Translated very often.

Prælectiones de obligatione Conscientiæ, by Bishop Sanderson, 1678.

Die Christliche Moral, by F. V. Reinhard, 1788-1815.

Ueber den Geist der Sittenlehre Jesu und seiner Apostel, by Johann Wilhelm Schmid, 1790.

Philosophische und biblische Moral, by C. F. Stäudlin, 1805.

Biographia Literaria, by S. T. Coleridge, Chapter xxiv., 1817.

System der Christlichen Lehre, by C. I. Nitzsch, 1829.

Lehrbuch der Christlichen Sittenlehre, by De Wette, 1833.

Christliche Moral, by C. Daub, 1840-1.

System der Christlichen Sittenlehre, etc., by H. Merz, 1841.

Christliche Ethik, by C. A. von Harless, 1842.

Endeavours after the Christian Life, by James Martineau, 1843.

Die Christliche Sitte, etc., by F. E. D. Schleiermacher. Edited posthumously by Jonas in 1843.

De l'Influence du Christianisme sur le Droit civil des Romains, by J. Troplong, 1843.

Die Grundbegriffe der Ethischen Wissenschaften, by Gust. Hartenstein, 1844.

Introduction to "William Law's Remarks on the Fable of the Bees," by F. D. Maurice, 1844.

System der Christlichen Moral, by Philip Marheineke, 1847.

Theologische Ethik, by Richard Rothe, 1845-48.

Saint Paul et Sénèque, by A. Fleury, 1853.

Essai historique sur la Société civile dans le monde Romain, et sur la transformation par le Christianisme, by C. Schmidt, 1853.

Epistles of St. Paul to the Thessalonians, Galatians, Romans, with Critical Notes and Dissertations, by B. Jowett, Vol. ii., 1855.

Die Grundbegriffe der Christlichen Sittenlehre, by C. F. Jäger, 1856.

Dialogues on Divine Providence, by a Fellow of a College, 1856.

Etude Critique sur les rapports supposés entre Sénèque et Saint Paul, by C. Aubertin, 1857.

The Epistles of St. John; a Series of Lectures, by F. D. Maurice, 1857.

"Seneca und Paulus," by C. F. Baur, in the *Zeitschrift für Wissenschaftliche Theologie*, 1858.

Christliche Sittenlehre, by Ch. F. Schmid, 1861.

Handbuch der Christlichen Sittenlehre, by Adolf Wuttke, 1861.

Thoughts on Personal Religion, by E. M. Goulburn, 1862.

Moral and Metaphysical Philosophy, by F. D. Maurice, 1862.

Religious Duty, by F. P. Cobbe, 1864.

Studies, Ethical and Social, by Frances Power Cobbe, 1865.

Ecce Homo, 1866.

Die Ethik Luthers, by C. E. Luthardt, 1867.

Seekers after God, by F. W. Farrar, 1868.

"St. Paul and Seneca," an Appendix to Vol. iii. of Bishop Lightfoot's *Epistles of St. Paul* (*the Epistle to the Philippians*), 1868.

The Gospel and Modern Life, by J. Llewelyn Davies, 1869.
Christ in Modern Life, by Stopford A. Brooke, 1872.
General Principles of Christian Ethics, by W. Mann (an abridgment of C. F. Schmid's *Ethik*), 1872.
Social Morality, by F. D. Maurice, 2nd ed., 1872.
The Conscience, by F. D. Maurice, 2nd ed., 1872.
Christianity and Morality, by H. Wace, 1876.
Theologische Ethik, by J. C. K. von Hofmann, 1878.
Grundriss der Christlichen Ethik, by J. P. Lange, 1878.
Die Christliche Ethik, by H. Martensen, 1878.
Geschichte der Christlichen Sitte, by H. J. Bestmann, 1880.
Grundriss der Glaubens und Sittenlehre, by O. Pfleiderer, 1880.
The Manliness of Christ, by Thomas Hughes, 1880.
The Foundation of Morality, by S. Leathes, 1882.
Laws of Life after the Mind of Christ, by J. H. Thom, 1883.
System der Christlichen Sittlichkeit, by Fr. H. R. Frank, 1884-87.
Christ and Democracy, by Charles W. Stubbs, 1884.
Christliche Sittenlehre, by A. Dorner, 1885.
Discipline of the Christian Character, by R. W. Church, 1885.
Godliness and Manliness, by J. W. Diggle, 1887.
Creed and Character, by H. Scott Holland, 1882.
Social Aspects of Christianity, by B. F. Westcott, 1887.
The Religion of Humanity, by J. Arthur Balfour, 1888.
The Relation of Ethics to Religion, by Robert Potter, 1888.
Christianity in relation to Science and Morals, by Malcolm MacColl, 1889.
The Province of Christian Ethics, by Vincent Henry Stanton, 1890.

Principles of Natural and Supernatural Morals, by Henry Hughes, 1890.

Right and Wrong, by W. G. Lilly, 1890.

Morality in Doctrine, by W. Bright, 1892.

Christian Ethics, by Newman Smyth, 1892.

The Relation of Christian Ethics to Philosophical Ethics, by John Dowden, Bishop of Edinburgh, 1892.

Our Moral Nature, by James McCosh, 1892.

"The Special Importance of the Study of Christian Ethics for the Church in the Present Day," an article in the *Economic Review* (April, 1893), by R. L. Ottley, being a paper read at the Church Congress in 1893, reprinted with *Addenda*.

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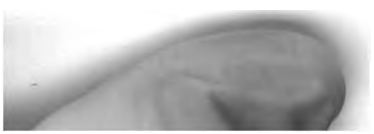

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